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Young Female Undercover

My terrifying night out
Ellie Flynn

INSIDE TIMES2



Ed Potton
Me, a balding muppet? If you say so

Christmas flights hit by airport walkouts

- Nearly a third of departures may be cancelled
- Sunak pledges tougher laws to tackle strikes

Ben Clatworthy
Transport Correspondent

Hundreds of thousands of passengers will have their Christmas and new year plans ruined as airport border staff walk out this month.

Airlines are being told by officials to cancel up to 30 per cent of flights on strike days to prevent chaos in airport arrival halls, The Times has learnt.

More than 1,000 Members of the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union employed by the Home Office to operate passport booths will stage two walkouts over the holiday.

The strike action, from December 23 to Boxing Day and from December 28 to New Year's Eve, will affect Heathrow, Gatwick, Manchester, Birmingham, Cardiff and Glasgow airports and the port of Newhaven. More than 10,000 flights are scheduled to land at the airports over the affected dates.

Rishi Sunak vowed yesterday to introduce "tough" laws to curb public sector strikes including those by NHS staff, rail workers, teachers, firefighters and Border Force officials. The prime minister said a package of measures would be announced in the new year, including the introduction of minimum service levels and an increase in the ballot thresholds for industrial action.

Airports are gearing up for their busiest Christmas in three years, with insiders predicting that many would exceed the levels of traffic in 2019 given the pent-up demand after the pandemic.

About 600 soldiers have been trained to stand in for those Border Force staff who are striking, but passengers are being warned that processing times will be slower. Home Office volunteers and staff from HM Revenue & Customs will also be drafted in.

In a letter to aviation bosses, seen by The Times, Phil Douglas, director-general of the Border Force, wrote: "Our contingency workforce will not be able to operate with the same efficiency as our permanent workforce. As is the case with any industrial action, we simply will not know levels of permanent Border Force officers who will report for duty until the day and what the operational impacts might be."

Douglas said that "additional measures and support from industry will be needed" for airports to cope with staff shortages and to avoid overcrowding in arrival halls.

Bosses were also warned that a huge reduction in passenger numbers may also be required on the days before and after the strike action. "The impact is going to be massive," a senior aviation

Continued on page 4

ANDREW KELLY/REUTERS



Royal drama The Duke and Duchess of Sussex in New York to collect an award for taking a stand against "structural racism" in the monarchy. A trailer for a Netflix documentary on the couple was criticised for using "misleading" images. Page 7

Dyson blasts 'self-defeating' new right to flexible work

Fariha Karim

Sir James Dyson has described the government as "economically illiterate and staggeringly self-defeating" over plans to give workers the right to request home working once they start a new job.

The entrepreneur and philanthropist writes in The Times today that changing legislation to enshrine flexible working rights from day one would jeopardise Britain's creativity and make it less attractive for foreign companies.

He said that the decision to legislate for working from home — a move driven by two years of lockdown during the Covid pandemic — had "superficial attractions" and was driven by "civil servants who enjoy working from home, despite the shockingly bad public service they often provide and their terrible track record of delivery".

Dyson, who was second in this year's The Sunday Times Rich List with a net worth of £23 billion, accused the government of "overreach" in its decision.

In a move welcomed by trade unions, the government said on Monday that it would introduce legislation giving employees the right to request flexible working immediately after starting a job. Dyson writes that the plan will jeopardise "the collaboration and in-person training that we need to develop new technology and maintain competitiveness against global rivals". He added: "To impose this policy during what is likely to be one of the worst recessions on record is economically illiterate and staggeringly self-defeating." At present, employees can make a flexible working request after 26 weeks in a job.

UK competitiveness is turning to dust, Sir James Dyson, page 45

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Today's highlights

7am **Gillian Keegan**, education secretary
11.40am **Sarah Hewson**, right, Talk TV royal editor, reviews Harry and Meghan's new Netflix documentary
2pm **Stig Abell** shares his Books to Live By
3.35pm **Jane Garvey** and **Fi Glover** speak to **Gyles Brandreth** about his new book documenting the life of the late Queen
7pm **Isabel Hardman** and **Rachel Cunliffe** discuss the day's big stories



TIMES RADIO
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TODAY'S EDITION

Strep A drugs running low
Antibiotics for children who have the potentially fatal strep A infection are "completely out of stock" in some areas, according to pharmacists. Steve Barclay, the health secretary, said supplies were being moved to meet demand. **Page 6**

Hancock to leave politics
Matt Hancock has announced that he will not stand at the next general election after a group of his local Conservative members declared him "not fit" to represent them. He said that he wanted to discover a "whole new world of possibilities" outside politics. **Page 10**

Comedian tells of sex assault
An award-winning comedian has spoken out about being sexually assaulted in public. Shaparak Khorsandi said she had feared the impact that reporting the assault would have on her career and that it took two years to gain a conviction. **Page 15**

COMMENT
Voters aren't deserting the Conservatives to the right, but overwhelmingly to the centre
DAVID AARONOVITCH, PAGE 31

Apprenticeships becoming elitist
Top apprenticeships are becoming elitist and colonised by the middle classes, a report says. Apprentices offered opportunities by employers such as Rolls-Royce study at university but are paid a salary and usually guaranteed a job when they qualify. **Page 12**

German police 'halt coup plot'
A right-wing judge and an aristocrat with pretensions to become Germany's new leader were arrested on suspicion of plotting to storm the Reichstag and overthrow the government. More than 3,000 police launched a series of dawn raids. **Pages 36-37**

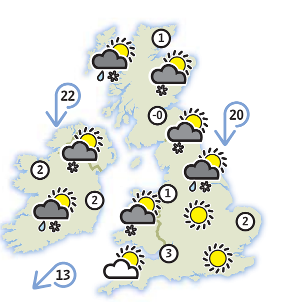
Wimbledon to end Russia ban
Wimbledon is poised to lift its ban on Russian players after the Lawn Tennis Association was fined $1 million by the ATP Tour and threatened with expulsion for banning Russian and Belarusian players from five tournaments this summer. **Page 74**

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THE WEATHER



Wintry showers in Scotland and northern England. Dry and sunny elsewhere. **Full forecast, page 65**

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Albanians lured by 'paradise' advertised on social media

Steven Swinford Political Editor

Albanians coming to Britain illegally are "victims of TikTok" lured on false promises that it will be a "paradise", the country's ambassador has said.

Qirjako Qirko said that the rise in the number of Albanians coming to the UK to claim asylum was partly because they hoped to set up businesses.

He told the home affairs select committee: "I have been in contact with some people. Some of them explained that, 'Yes, we are victims of TikTok and Facebook. We have come here because we thought it would be easy to start a business.' Yesterday I was talking with a gentleman from the south of Albania. In Albania he was running a small bar in the city. He told me that there was some opportunity to open this kind of business in the UK, 'but after three weeks I saw it was not possible to do this kind of business'."

Qirko called for an end to the "campaign of discrimination" against Albanians living in the UK. He said: "I would like to take this opportunity to ask that this campaign of discrimination against Albanians living here in the UK should stop." Children were being bullied at school "only because they are Albanians" as a result of the "wave of activity", he said, demanding that anyone responsible should apologise.

Albanians accounted for just over a third of cross-Channel migrants in the first nine months of the year, according to figures published last month by the Home Office. Out of 33,029 arrivals from January to September, 11,241 (35 per cent) were Albanian. This is a sharp increase compared with the 3 per cent recorded in the whole of last year.

Asked why the number of Albanians crossing the Channel had increased so much, Qirko said: "Officially, my embassy, my government … have no information regarding this number."

He said repeatedly that Albania was a safe country, telling MPs: "The problem is, it seems, that the people arriving here … they pretend to be a victim of modern slavery." When asked whether he thought all Albanians arriving were pretending, he said: "I don't know."

Qirko later confirmed that he would be happy to see Albanians deemed to be victims of modern slavery returned to their home country.

Asked whether he agreed that the UK should not have to recognise any asylum claims from Albanian citizens, he said: "It's up to the British authorities to decide. I cannot discuss this issue because it's not my problem. What I can say is, Albania is a safe country."

Asked again whether his government would have a problem with such a UK policy, he said: "I don't want to comment … I am not allowed to comment."

Tim Loughton, a Conservative MP, said: "You are here as a representative of the Albanian government. I am purely asking a reasonable question as to what the response of the Albanian government would be, because that's key to whether the United Kingdom government adopts that policy or not."

Qirko also said that the matter was "not the responsibility of the Albanian government" when he was asked whether it should pay the UK for housing his country's migrants in hotels.

● Thousands more immigration cases will be heard over the next few months after the government provided £5 million in funding to increase the number of days in which tribunals can take place. Up to 9,000 more immigration and asylum cases will be heard, according to the Ministry of Justice, including appeals over failed asylum claims.

Universities banned from silencing victims of abuse

Nicola Woolcock Education Editor
George Sandeman

Universities and colleges will be banned from using gagging orders to silence students who complain about sexual abuse, bullying, harassment and misconduct on campus.

The amendment to the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill was passed during a debate in the Lords last night with cross-party support.

It was proposed by a Labour peer and supported by the government after concerns that institutions had used non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) to stop rape victims speaking out about their treatment.

A previous investigation by the BBC had found universities used more than 300 NDAs in student complaints between 2016 and 2020, with almost a third of universities in England having used such agreements.

Lord Collins of Highbury, the shadow deputy leader of the Lords, welcomed the government's support for his amendment which he said would "stop a nasty practice of non-disclosure agreements inhibiting free speech".

Baroness Barran, the education minister, said: "We cannot allow this practice to continue. It's been encouraging to see that many institutions have signed up to a voluntary pledge rejecting the use of NDAs … however it is telling that many institutions have not done so despite strong encouragement from the government."

The bill aims to protect freedom of speech at universities after incidents in which staff or students have faced threats and harassment because of their opinions. One case involved Kathleen Stock, a former lecturer at Sussex University, who was forced to quit after being targeted by trans activists over her views on gender identity.

The government was later defeated in a vote on an amendment that removed a section of the bill enabling universities and students' unions to be sued for a breach of freedom of speech.

Lord Willetts, the former Tory universities minister, challenged ministerial claims that litigation would be "a backstop". He said: "If one of these controversies flares up there will be a lawyer's letter in the first 24 hours.

"We already face a very worrying trend of a decline in the number of external speakers going to university."

The House of Lords approved the amendment by 213 votes to 172.

Labour wants defence deal with Germans

George Grylls

Britain should consider a defence partnership with Germany to curb Russian aggression, Labour has said.

Sir Keir Starmer is exploring the possibility of a partnership between the two countries, which are Nato's two biggest defence spenders in Europe. The agreement would mirror the Lancaster House agreement with France.

Since Olaf Scholz was elected chancellor last year Labour has cultivated close ties with the SPD, its sister party in Berlin. In July, Starmer travelled there for talks and Lord Mandelson urged Starmer to seek inspiration from the "unflashy" Scholz.

Germany is not a member of the UK Joint Expeditionary Force, a defence partnership led by the UK that brings together ten northern European nations. Germany and the UK are also competitors in the race to develop the next-generation fighter jet.

John Healey, the shadow defence secretary, said: "Germany, as part of the EU, and the UK should sit at the heart of a strong pillar in Nato, taking greater responsibility for European security."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
Airport walkouts

source said. "The strikes have the prospect of ruining the first normal Christmas in three years." The source said that airports and airlines would identify flights that would be stripped from timetables. Airlines will push for short-haul flights, which produce lower revenues, to make way for long-haul routes.

Mark Serwotka, the PCS general secretary, said: "The government can stop these strikes tomorrow if it puts money on the table. Like so many workers, our members are struggling with the cost of living crisis. They are desperate. They are being told there is no money for them, while they watch ministers giving out government contracts worth billions of pounds to their mates." Serwotka said that ministers were refusing to increase a 2 per cent pay rise offer and warned that the union would step up its action in the new year unless the deadlock was broken.

A spokesman for Airlines UK, which represents British airlines, said that it "urged all parties to work on reaching an agreement to avoid industrial action at what is such an important time of year for many travellers." The Airport Operators Association said that "concrete and deliverable contingency measures" would be put in place if the strikes went ahead.

Cirium, the aviation analytics company, said that 10,072 fights were scheduled to land at the airports on the affected dates, with more than two million seats combined. More than 600,000 passengers are likely to have their flights cancelled. A Heathrow spokesman said: "Our priority is to ensure passengers get through the border safely and as quickly as possible. We are working closely with airlines and Border Force on mitigation plans."

Robert Jenrick, the immigration minister, said: "The union's decision to strike over the festive period is unjustifiable and will ruin the plans of thousands of families and businesses. While we are working closely with all UK ports and airports and have robust plans in place to minimise any delays if strike action goes ahead, passengers should be prepared for their plans to be severely disrupted."

Sunak plans crackdown, pages 8-9

Manchester City owners top the league of world's richest families

Tom Ball Northern Correspondent

Sheikh Mansour can often be seen high up in the terraces of the Etihad stadium, receiving the adulation of Manchester City fans like a benevolent monarch as they acknowledge the part his family's riches played in propelling their club to the top of the Premier League.

Now the Al Nahyan family, of which Mansour, 52, is a prominent scion, finds itself at the top of another table, usurping the Waltons of Walmart for the first time to become the richest family in the world.

According to the latest Bloomberg index, the net worth of the family now amounts to at least $300 billion.

The Al Nahyans, of Abu Dhabi, are one of the six ruling families of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, 61, often known as MBZ, is the ruler of Abu Dhabi. He was elected president of the UAE this year following the death of his half-brother, Sheikh Khalifa.

While the foundation of much of the family's fortune rests on the Arabian peninsula's vast oil reserves, canny investments in everything from sports clubs, the London property market, Rihanna's lingerie line, fast food and Elon Musk's SpaceX have catapulted the family to even greater wealth.

Their investment firm International Holding Co (IHC) has seen its value surge almost 28,000 per cent over the past five years.

Mohammed and Mansour may be the best known members of the family, but it is their brother Sheikh Tahnoon, 53, who controls much of its financial empire. He is head of the Abu Dhabi wealth fund ADQ as well as the country's top lender, First Abu Dhabi Bank. A black belt in jiujitsu, he is also the UAE's national security adviser. Business is often conducted aboard his superyacht. The family own at least three, including Azzam, the largest privately owned yacht in the world.

At the heart of the Al Nahyans' wealth is Royal Group, a web of companies that employs more than 27,000 people in fields from finance to robotics and commands assets worth close to $300 billion, people familiar with its operations told Bloomberg. As well as investing in a wide assortment of companies, it acts at the behest of the family, flying in world-class chefs to cook for them and hiring personal bodyguards.

Despite the family's runaway success, foreign investors have been wary of ploughing money into its companies over transparency concerns, sources told Bloomberg.

In its latest annual report on IHC's accounts, the accountancy firm Ernst & Young said that its financial statements receive a review that is "substantially less in scope" than audits conducted under international standards.

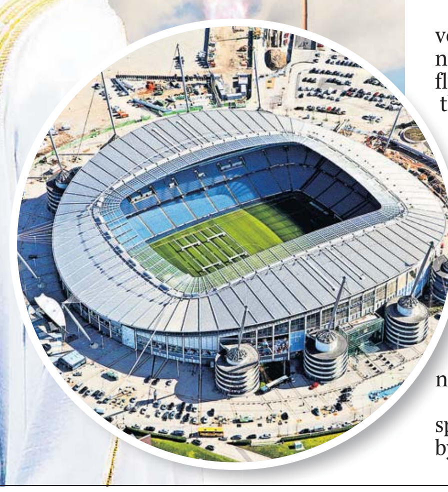
The Al Nahyan family did not respond to requests for comment made by The Times through its companies.





The Al Nahyans own the superyacht Azzam and Manchester City. Rihanna and SpaceX are among those backed by the family's finances, run by Sheikh Tahnoon, below left. His brother Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed is president of the UAE





Relative values

1. The Al Nahyan family (estimated wealth: $300 billion) Their financial interests include stakes in Manchester City FC, Elon Musk's SpaceX and Rihanna's fashion firm Savage X Fenty. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, one of the family, is the United Arab Emirates' president.

2. The Walton family ($224.5 billion) Sam Walton founded Walmart in Arkansas in 1962. It was the world's largest company in 2021 by revenue. Walton's children Jim, Alice and Rob Walton are now each worth about $65 billion.

3. The Mars family ($160 billion) The confectionary company he founded is now perhaps better known for M&Ms than its eponymous chocolate bar, but Frank Mars's great-grandchildren are among those running the firm.

4. The Koch family ($128.8 billion) Frederick, Charles, David and William inherited their father Fred's oil firm, but a feud over control of the company in the early 1980s led Frederick and William to leave the business. It has since become a conglomerate with annual revenues of about $125 billion. Charles and David, who both died in 2019, donated hundreds of millions of dollars to bring fringe ideas to the centre of US politics.

5. The Al Saud family ($105 billion) The Saudi royal family contains as many as 15,000 extended members and has a monarchical history extending back nearly a century. Ties with Saudi Aramco, a behemoth of the oil industry, ensures that they continue to accumulate wealth.

Writing is on the wall as authors' pay falls to £7,000 a year

Emma Yeomans

The average pay for authors has fallen by 60 per cent to £7,000 a year, despite rising book sales.

The Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS) has found a decline in income for professional authors, prompting warnings that writing will soon be the preserve of the wealthy.

In 2006, the median earnings from self-employed writing were £12,330 but that has since fallen by £5,330 a year. Adjusted for inflation, this equates to a 60 per cent drop. The report's authors said the findings raised "serious questions about the sustainability of the writing profession in the UK".

Amy Thomas, the lead researcher, said: "Whilst many of our respondents talked about their love of creating and passion for writing, relying on their altruism has been used to justify an increasingly unliveable wage."

The report also found a widening gender pay gap. In 2016, women writers earned 33 per cent less than men; this is now 41 per cent. White authors earned more than twice the salary of black authors, the study found, though the sample size for black and minority ethnic writers was small.

The study found the drop in earnings had reduced the proportion of authors writing for a full-time living, from 40 per cent of all writers in 2006 to 19 per cent this year.

The report notes that authors are now having to rely on other jobs, or alternative income streams including the earnings of other members of their household to survive.

The Covid pandemic was found to have had a "negative effect" on authors.

Miranda Dickinson, a bestselling author who has sold more than a million books, said that despite increasing how much she wrote, her income had declined. "If it's bad for established authors, think how much worse it is for new writers," she said. "There is so much talent out there, and this is an industry which is trying to diversify itself and open up to new voices: working class writers, women writers, writers of colour.

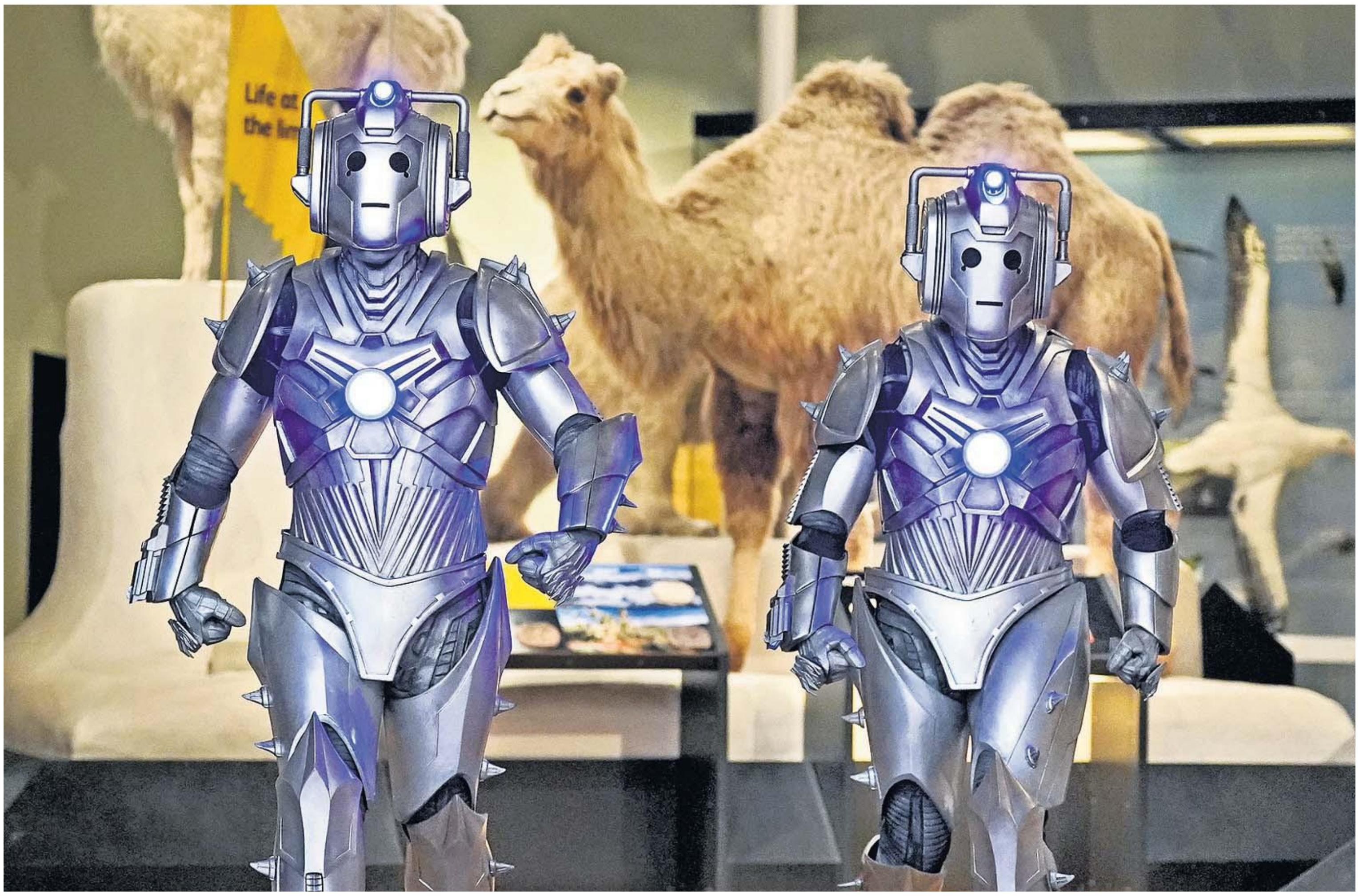
"Everyone should find themselves in a book and readers are interested in so many stories. But I fear the shrinking pay will mean fewer and fewer new writers are able to enter the industry."

Dickinson said that she used to put out one book a year on average, but had recently had five published in 18 months. Her next romance novel, *All My Love*, comes out in February, and she publishes crime fiction under the name MJ White.

The squeeze on pay meant writers were under more pressure to write more, or come up with new pen names and personas to put out books in a different genre, she added.

Barbara Hayes, chief executive of the ALCS, said: "Given the clear contribution writers make to the economy and society as a whole, their work should be properly valued and rewarded. For too many professional writers that simply isn't the case at present."

ANDREW MILLIGAN/PA



Double trouble Cybermen are on display in the Doctor Who Worlds of Wonder exhibition, which opens tomorrow at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh

Quintagram® No 1493

Solve all five clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Gaming cube (3)

— — —

2 Comfort amid sadness (6)

— — — — — —

3 Sufficient (6)

— — — — — —

4 Period spent at one company (7)

— — — — — — —

5 Upmarket London avenue (4,6)

— — — — — — — — — —

A	B	C	C	D	D	E	E
E	E	E	E	E	G	H	I
I	L	N	N	O	O	O	R
R	S	S	S	T	T	U	V

Solutions MindGames in Times2
Cryptic clues page 10 of Times2

Boat smuggling arrest

A powerboat owner has been arrested on suspicion of smuggling migrants across the Channel. The man, 57, who was not named, was held after the National Crime Agency visited a gated property in Lydford, Devon, on Tuesday. He is accused of using a Sunseeker motor yacht to take at least ten migrants from Normandy to Slapton Sands in the county in the summer. The NCA said the arrest followed a "lengthy investigation".

Stocks of antibiotics for strep A run low as parents rush to GPs

Eleanor Hayward
Health Correspondent
Anna Cunningham Times Radio

Parents are struggling to get hold of antibiotics for children who have the strep A infection, pharmacists claim.

GPs say the first line of treatment for sick children, penicillin V, is "completely out of stock" in some areas. They add that they are being contacted by floods of worried parents.

The National Pharmacy Association said there had been "blips" in the penicillin supply chain. Some pharmacists were turning away parents, it added.

Steve Barclay, the health secretary, denied there was a shortage of antibiotics but stock was having to be "moved around to meet demand".

The demand for antibiotics has risen after at least nine children died from strep A infections in recent weeks. Strep A is a common bacterium found in the throat and on the skin, which can cause a range of usually mild illnesses, including scarlet fever.

On rare occasions it gets into the bloodstream and causes invasive group A streptococcal disease, which can be deadly. Infections are treated with penicillin or amoxicillin antibiotics.

The spate of deaths means GPs have been told to set a low threshold for prescribing antibiotics to children with symptoms such as a sore throat.

Ministers have suggested antibiotics could be given en masse to children at primary schools hit by the outbreak.

Pharmacists and GPs say the rising demand has led to "patchy" supplies of phenoxymethylpenicillin, penicillin V, the first line of treatment. The second option, amoxicillin, is also in short supply. GPs say that in some cases further options are also unavailable.

Dr Leyla Hannbeck, chief executive at the Association of Independent Multiple Pharmacies, said penicillin V was out of stock in patches "all over the country". She told Times Radio: "When you go online to order these medicines, particularly the liquid ones for children, you get these red marks saying that the product is out of stock. And this is happening all over the country.

"When we get it, it flies off the shelf. But then we can't order it again.

"The Department of Health is saying there's enough supplies to go around but there isn't. We've got parents coming in expecting to get these medicines and we just cannot supply it."

Dr Soumitri Chakraborty, a Birmingham GP, said doctors' hands were tied by the shortages. "It's a very panicky situation," she said. "Parents are worried.

"We are prescribing [penicillin]. They are going to the pharmacy not getting it, coming back to us … and we are prescribing the second option [amoxicillin liquid] that's not there. Then we are not getting that third option.

"Penicillin V is out of stock in my area and I have talked to many other parts in the West Midlands as well, and everyone is saying penicillin V is out of stock."

Dr Selvaseelan Selvarajah, a GP in Tower Hamlets, east London, said stocks of penicillin V were low. "We are issuing electronic prescriptions to any pharmacy so patients can seek out ones with stock," he said. "We are being inundated with worried parents."

Barclay said yesterday the supply levels of antibiotics was "not a concern" but stock could be moved to GPs reporting shortages. "We have well-established procedures in terms of moving stock around," he said.

Two children are in hospital and more than 20 are ill after a strep outbreak at a primary school in Wales.

Two children at Brynaman primary school in Carmarthenshire were taken to hospital after becoming unwell. One was sent to the University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff. The Wales government said it was working with the UK government to procure antibiotics.

Nation 'ill prepared for next crisis'

Oliver Wright Policy Editor

Britain is still not prepared for another potentially catastrophic event like the Covid-19 pandemic, the head of the government's spending watchdog is warning.

Gareth Davies, of the National Audit Office (NAO), says in a speech to be given to MPs today that ministers and officials underestimated the "likelihood and impact" of the pandemic and the energy crisis.

He says that there is not enough work being done in government to assess and mitigate the risk of "whole-system emergencies".

"The experience of the last few years should be enough to demonstrate that we need a more realistic assessment of risk — both the likelihood and the impact of adverse events," he says.

Davies highlights the threat of climate change and a recent NAO report that found the south of England could "run out of water" by 2040. He says the government must ensure that the UK is resilient enough to withstand costly crises without placing an unaffordable burden on taxpayers.

"Expected changes in rainfall in the coming decades will severely stress our water resources," he says. "To be truly resilient, government must plan for scenarios it previously dismissed as extreme, and revisit existing assessments."

Davies also highlights the failure to be transparent about how emergency contracts were handled during the pandemic. He says that while some "normal processes and checks" needed to be scrapped to save lives the government should have been transparent to MPs and the public about the compromises.

Britain has world's biggest increase of early-onset diabetes

Eleanor Hayward

Cases of type 2 diabetes in young adults have risen faster in Britain than anywhere else in the world, research shows.

The obesity crisis has led to nearly a five-fold increase in the number of under-40s living with the condition in the UK since 1990.

A major study looked at 204 countries between 1990 and 2019, examining rates of early-onset diabetes, when the disease develops in people aged 15 to 40.

It found the UK was the worst affected country in the world, with cases jumping from 94 per 100,000 people in 1990 to 347 per 100,000 now.

Globally, rates of the disease in young adults have increased from 117 per 100,000 people in 1990 to 183 in 2019, with women more likely to be affected.

The study, published in the British Medical Journal, said obesity now causes two thirds of cases, up from around four in ten cases 30 years ago.

Two in three adults in England are classified as obese or overweight, up from around half in 1990. Obesity is the leading cause of type 2 diabetes, which used to be very rare in under-40s. The latest NHS data shows there are now a record 148,000 people in the UK under the age of 40 who have been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

The research, published in the British Medical Journal, said: "These findings indicate that the incidence and severity of early onset type 2 diabetes is increasing, and measures are urgently needed to control its spread in adolescents and young adults in almost every country."

Diabetes UK said: "We want to see the government press ahead with evidence-based policies aimed at improving the health of our nation and addressing the stark health inequalities that exist in parts of the UK."

Nearly five million Britons have diabetes, which occurs as the body stops producing or responding to insulin. Nine in ten of these have type 2. Type 1 is an unpreventable autoimmune condition usually diagnosed in childhood.

Rising obesity levels mean one in ten adults are expected to have type 2 by 2030.

British TV 'wouldn't allow royal trailer'

Jack Malvern

Netflix's use of "misleading" library footage in the trailer for its Harry & Meghan documentary would not be tolerated by British broadcasters, producers have said.

The American streaming service, which is not regulated by Ofcom, showed two pieces of stock footage that appeared to show the Duke and Duchess of Sussex being surrounded by photographers but which were from unrelated occasions.

One, edited to suggest that photographers rushed at the couple when they visited Brixton in south London, was actually footage of press approaching the glamour model Katie Price at Crawley magistrates court. The other was footage of Michael Cohen, Donald Trump's former lawyer, surrounded by photographers as he left his flat to begin a prison sentence.

Peter Grimsdale, a former commissioning editor for *Panorama* on the BBC and *Dispatches* on Channel 4, said that in-house lawyers would have intervened before the trailer was broadcast. "It's almost hard-wired into us to make sure we know where every shot comes from because that's the sort of thing that if there was complaints about it, you would be in real trouble. There's a certain duty of care. I think people working for Sky would feel the same way. It's partly a function of regulations just being different in America."

Other broadcasters including Greg Dyke, a former BBC director-general, agreed the trailer was controversial.

However, David Elstein, a former head of programmes at Thames Television and BskyB, and the founding chief executive of Channel 5, said that trailers should not be judged as strictly as documentaries. "These seem pretty minor misdemeanours to me and would be unlikely to attract much attention from Ofcom [if Netflix were subject to regulation]." He added: "I would have two watchwords here: mountains and molehills."

Julian Mounter, who was chief executive of Television New Zealand, a managing director of Seven Network in Australia and a producer on Panorama, was less forgiving.

"I would find it unacceptable to beef up a particular section of a documentary using stuff from another event — that's totally unacceptable," he said. "Is it done? Increasingly, yes. People are trying to save money and don't go on location as much. There are occasions when people are more casual."

Dyke said that trailers had more latitude but the footage made him "deeply suspicious" of standards in the documentary, the first episode of which is released today.

He suggested a difference in culture. "None of it would be as sensitive [to American broadcasters] as it is here."

Grimsdale said that in Britain "99.9 per cent of the time this doesn't happen because everyone checks."

He cited examples including an apology by the survivalist Bear Grylls in 2008 after he stayed at hotels rather than sleeping in the wild as was suggested in his series *Born Survivor*.

The BBC apologised on air in 2011 after admitting its *Panorama* investigation into Primark in 2008 contained mocked up footage of a sweat shop.

In 2003 Sky News was fined £50,000 after it broadcast a report that appeared to show a missile being fired at Iraq from a Royal Navy submarine but actually was library footage of a missile test.

In 1998 Carlton was fined £2 million for "breach of trust" after *The Connection*, a documentary, used faked footage purporting to show a drugs mule bringing cocaine to Britain from Colombia.

Grimsdale said: "I'm going to be watching the Harry & Meghan show with an eagle eye to see what else is wrong with it."

Netflix has not commented.

Buckingham Palace must counter these claims, Thunderer, page 32

Analysis

When Jimmy Carr joked about the mass murder of gypsies in a Netflix show, it led to protests — and revealed how helpless British viewers were to complain about the service (Mark Sellman writes).

The streaming giant's European base is the Netherlands and it is under the Dutch regulator. Dame Melanie Dawes, chief executive of Ofcom, was asked at the time if the UK regulator should take over. She replied: "I can certainly see that there'll be real value in that."

The government plans to give Ofcom the power to regulate Netflix, Amazon and similar services. After a consultation last year, the intention is to let Ofcom draft and enforce a "video-on-demand code" in the forthcoming media bill.

Beyond allowing British viewers to complain, would it make any difference? "Probably not a great deal," said Tom Harrington, of the research company Enders Analysis.

ANDREW KELLY/REUTERS; BRIAN PRAHL/MEGA





The Duke of Sussex with his wife, who was wearing a ring that was inherited from Princess Diana

Meghan: Tear down walls of oppression

The Duchess of Sussex said collective action could "sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance" at an awards ceremony in New York (Keiran Southern and Valentine Low write).

She and the duke were given an award for taking a stand against "structural racism" in the monarchy on the eve of the launch of their Netflix documentary series in which they are expected to make renewed attacks on the institution.

Harry and Meghan were honoured at the Ripple of Hope gala, organised by the Robert F Kennedy Human Rights foundation. She arrived at the event in a Manhattan hotel wearing a £75,000 ring that Princess Diana once wore.

The duchess said Kennedy, the attorney-general who was shot dead in 1968, offered "a vision for the common good of society". She added: "He also said those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

Kerry Kennedy, the politician's daughter, praised the couple for their work highlighting mental health and racial justice. She said: "They've stood up … in a way that was incredibly brave."

Harry joked with her, saying: "I'll be honest with you, Kerry, I just thought we [Meghan and I] were just going on a date night so I found it quite weird that we're sharing the room with 1,500 people.

"We don't get out much these days because our kids are so small. This is completely unexpected."

Back in the UK, the King was praised for his role in fostering race relations in the workplace. He was attending the 40th anniversary celebrations of Business in the Community (BITC), of which he was founding patron.

BITC, founded in 1982, is the longest-established membership organisation dedicated to fostering responsible business practices. Sandra Kerr, a director at BITC, said: "For me, the big thing is in 1995 he was convening conversations about race with business leaders."

At Clarence House the Queen welcomed seriously ill children to help decorate the Christmas tree. "It's always a treat for me to start the Christmas season here," she said. "It literally kicks it off for us."





New 50p with King's portrait is out today

Debbie White

A new 50p piece with the King's portrait will enter circulation today and will gradually replace those bearing the image of the late Queen.

A total of 4.9 million 50p coins will enter circulation as customers make purchases in 9,452 Post Office branches throughout December, and 9.6 million are expected to be distributed in total, in line with demand.

Rebecca Morgan, director of collector services at the Royal Mint, said: "The Royal Mint has been trusted to make coins bearing the monarch's effigy for over 1,100 years, and we are proud to continue this tradition into the reign of King Charles III."

The sculptor Martin Jennings created the portrait which depicts the King facing to the left — the opposite direction to the late Queen — in keeping with the tradition of alternating with each monarch.

The reverse of the coin pays tribute to his mother. It was designed to commemorate her coronation, and includes the four quarters of the Royal Arms depicted within a shield.

Between each shield is an emblem of the home nations: a rose, a thistle, a shamrock and a leek.

All 27 billion UK coins bearing the image of Queen Elizabeth II will remain legal tender and in active circulation, but they will be replaced over time as they become damaged or worn, and to meet demand for new coins.



Sunak may limit right to strike

Steven Swinford Political Editor

Rishi Sunak is preparing to announce new laws to curb the rights of NHS workers, teachers, firefighters and border force officials to go on strike.

The government plans to bring forward legislation to introduce minimum service levels across the public sector to limit the impact of industrial action.

Ministers will announce a package of measures in the New Year which will also include increasing the threshold for industrial action and force unions to give more notice of strikes.

The government has also considered plans for an outright ban on ambulance workers and paramedics striking. A Whitehall source said, however, that the move was unlikely because it would be "legally complex" and could be subject to challenge.

The prime minister set out his approach in the Commons yesterday in a significant change of tone. He said: "The government has been reasonable. It has accepted the recommendations of a pay review body, giving pay rises in many cases higher than the private sector. But if the union leaders continue to be unreasonable, then it is my duty to take action to protect the lives and livelihoods of the British public.

"That is why, since I became prime minister, I have been working for new tough laws to protect people from this disruption."

His announcement came a day after ambulance workers announced strike action on December 21. Ministers are increasingly concerned that industrial action will dominate the run-in to the next general election.

Unions have insisted that they will not back down. Sharon Graham, the general secretary of the Unite union, said: "We will not be intimidated by anti-trade union attacks. If they put more hurdles in our way, then we will jump over them. We are ready industrially and financially."

The centrepiece of Sunak's legislation will be plans to extend minimum service levels across the public sector. The government has already announced plans that would require 20 per cent of regular rail services to continue during strikes. This could apply to six sectors, including education, the NHS and the fire service.

Ministers also intend to increase the threshold for strike action. Under laws that took effect in 2017, unions in certain sectors can only strike if 40 per cent of all eligible members vote in favour of taking action.

The government is proposing to extend that provision to every part of the economy and to raise the threshold to 50 per cent.

Other measures include doubling the minimum notice period for industrial action from 14 days and reducing the six-month limit for industrial action after a successful ballot.

The prime minister's official spokesman said government work on new measures was "ongoing" and that "we want to do it at speed".

He said: "We keep the powers under review and obviously in light of what we are seeing with effectively rolling strikes, the prime minister thinks it is right to push ahead with new powers."

Frances O'Grady, the general secretary of the TUC, accused Sunak of "attempting cheap political potshots" with his warning about new anti-strike legislation.

"Public sector workers would love to be able to deliver minimum service levels," she said. "But 12 years of Conservative cuts and mismanagement have left our public services falling apart at the seams.

"Rather than attempting cheap political potshots, the government should be getting around the table and negotiating with unions about pay."

Gillian Keegan, the education secretary, said earlier that ministers were looking into how they might prioritise special provisions for vulnerable children in the event of teacher strikes going ahead.

Three of the four major teaching unions are balloting members on possible industrial action. Keegan urged teachers not to walk out, stressing the need to keep children in school.

Asked if there were any plans in place to prioritise the most vulnerable pupils during any potential strikes, as the government did during the pandemic, she said: "There's a lot of planning going on across government, actually, to mitigate the impact of harmful strike action.

"And that is, of course, one of the factors we're looking at — how we can do that, relying on various other pools of people and staff. So yes, that's something that's part of the planning."

Sober Sunak earns Tories a dullness dividend, Iain Martin, page 33



Rishi Sunak managed to crack a smile during prime minister's questions yesterday. Sunak said it was his "duty to take action

PM's options

Minimum service levels
Rishi Sunak has revived plans to curb the rights of public sector staff to go on strike amid concerns that Britain could face years of industrial action.

The government has already announced plans that would require 20 per cent of regular rail services to continue during strikes. Ministers are considering extending these plans across the public sector in an attempt to stop widespread disruption, a plan considered by Liz Truss. She was considering minimum service requirements for six areas, including teachers, NHS staff and firefighters.

In France local authorities must ensure that children are cared for during teachers' strikes. Truss's law would have required employers and unions to agree minimum service levels, with strikes banned until they did.

The government is initially looking at schools, the NHS, the fire service and border control. Police, prison staff and the armed forces are already banned from striking.

Thresholds for strikes
At present strikes can go ahead only if there is a 50 per cent turnout of eligible union members and a majority of those voting is in favour.

In key public services such as health, education and transport there is a higher threshold, with the backing of 40 per cent of all eligible members required, not just those who voted.

Ministers are considering extending the requirement to every sector of the economy and raising the threshold to require the support of 50 per cent of all eligible members. Whether this would stop industrial action remains to be seen. RMT members voted overwhelmingly for industrial action, for example. It is thought, however, that the Royal College of Nursing struggled to reach 50 per cent in many areas.

Ballots
Unions must at present give two weeks' notice of a strike. Ministers fear this is limiting the government's ability to develop contingency plans to reduce the impact on people's lives. Under one proposal ministers are looking at doubling the minimum notice period.

The cooling-off period
At present unions have a six-month time limit within which they can hold industrial action after a successful ballot, which can be extended to nine months if there is agreement between a union and employer. Ministers are considering plans to reduce the time limit or the number of times that unions are able to take industrial action during that period.

Banning strike action
Industrial action is banned in the three sectors already mentioned — the police, prison officers and the services. Yesterday Downing Street did not rule out extending the ban to other areas such as paramedics, but government sources said it was highly unlikely. It would require legislation and would be likely to face a significant legal challenge.

Labour would help unions take more industrial action

Keith Perry

Labour has said that if it wins power it will rip up strike laws, making it easier for unions to take industrial action.

Sir Keir Starmer would repeal the 2016 Trade Union Act, which imposes conditions on unions that want to strike, a spokesman said.

The measures in the act include a rule that ballots must attract a 50 per cent turnout for their results to be legally valid. Workers in "important" public services — including healthcare, education and transport — have to reach an additional threshold of 40 per cent support among those eligible to vote. The law also dictates that unions must give two weeks' notice before they walk out.

A Labour spokesman said the party would repeal the "archaic" act and added that there were "unnecessary elements" in trade union legislation that could be changed, too. "One example would be … not allowing online balloting," they said. "We don't think that's practical, we think it's costly and we think that's unnecessary."

They added that Labour will also oppose the government's "unworkable" plan for legislation on minimum service levels during walkouts.

Sharon Graham, general secretary of the Unite union, said of Rishi Sunak yesterday: "Rather than dealing with … workers suffering pay cuts as prices rocket, he promises to attack the very organisations fighting for workers and putting more money in their pockets. If they put more hurdles in our way, then we will jump over them. We are ready industrially and financially."

Trade unions have donated more than £15 million to Labour, its constituency parties and its MPs since Sir Keir became leader, according to Tory analysis of Electoral Commission figures. This includes over £3 million each from Unite, Unison and GMB, which represent ambulance workers, who are due to strike on December 21.

for workers in the public sector



to protect the lives and livelihoods of the British public" as he prepared to announce new laws to curb public sector strikes

Troops ready to provide back-up during walkouts

Steven Swinford, George Grylls, Chris Smyth, Henry Zeffman

Hundreds of soldiers will be drafted in to drive ambulances and provide logistical support to limit the impact of co-ordinated strikes on the NHS.

The Department for Health is poised to submit a formal request for military support after unions called the first nationwide strike action by paramedics in three decades.

The request will be made under the military aid to civil authorities protocol, known as Maca, which was used during the Covid pandemic when the armed forces helped to deliver PPE and set up mobile testing units. The army can be called in only when a "civil authority lacks the capability to fulfil the task and it would be unreasonable or too expensive to expect one to be developed".

The unions have offered only a broad promise to provide "emergency cover" or "life-and-limb cover" during a day of co-ordinated ambulance service strikes announced yesterday for December 21.

The Ministry of Defence has already agreed to a Home Office request to provide 600 soldiers to the Border Force, with troops trained to check passports during walkouts.

The NHS is preparing for strikes by nurses, paramedics and 999 call handlers. The Department of Health is expected to submit a formal request for support to the MoD, with an agreement likely to be reached today.

Some in the NHS said military assistance would make a marginal difference to the disruption. Soldiers are unlikely to be able to drive blue-light ambulances because they lack the special training required to respond to emergencies. They may be used for patient transport but some health chiefs argue that it would be cheaper and simpler to use taxis. Military personnel are likely to provide logistical support.

In recent weeks the MoD has been fielding requests from across Whitehall as the UK prepares for weeks of industrial unrest. Firefighters are also being balloted for strike action in the new year and soldiers are likely to be deployed in any walkouts.

Senior members of the armed forces were reported to have told ministers that soldiers should not be made to give up Christmas to cover for striking workers. They said it was "not right" that military personnel, who were not legally allowed to strike, should be made to give up their holidays and retrain for a variety of emergency roles, according to The Daily Telegraph.

Steve Barclay, the health secretary, said it was not clear whether heart attack and stroke patients would be seen by ambulance crews.

He was asked on Times Radio whether people in a condition that could become life-threatening if they were made to wait for six or more hours would be seen quickly enough. He replied: "I share the concern and that is basically why I don't want these strikes to happen . . . I am very keen that we continue that dialogue because the risk you identify is the key one."

Barclay added that the unions "have said that they will continue to offer life-threatening service" to category one emergencies but that it was not clear whether they would respond to all category two emergencies, such as heart attacks and strokes.

Barclay insisted that the government would not give ground on pay and pointed to the "independent process" through which levels of pay are recommended to the government.

Private hospitals could ease backlog

Chris Smyth Whitehall Editor

Patients will be encouraged to choose private hospitals for NHS care under plans to help clear backlogs of routine operations through outsourcing more treatment.

A task force of private healthcare bosses and NHS chiefs met in Downing Street for the first time yesterday in an effort to find more capacity for hip replacements, cataracts and other routine procedures in the independent sector. NHS bosses are hopeful of meeting a target to eliminate waits of more than 18 months by April, but there is increasing concern in government about whether one-year waits can be eliminated by 2025 as planned.

Private hospitals say they have spare capacity that could help bring down waits but NHS bosses have been sceptical. Patients have long had a legal right to choose where they are treated but ministers are planning a fresh push for GPs to offer them the choice of having NHS treatment in private hospitals, in a revival of a Blair-era scheme.

Steve Barclay, the health secretary, said he wanted to "turbocharge our current plans to bust the backlog and help patients get the treatment they need".

The task force, led by the health minister Will Quince, will "look at sensible steps to utilise all existing capacity to slash waiting lists while ensuring the NHS always remains free at the point of use," Barclay said. Wes Streeting, the shadow health secretary, has also said that private care will be "one of the levers" in dealing with a post-Covid backlog as the party seeks to show it is serious about NHS reform.

A government source added: "We're bringing in the best minds from all sides to help cut the backlog."

David Hare, the chief executive of the Independent Healthcare Providers Network, said: "Giving patients a legal right to choose an independent sector provider for their treatment was a big factor in getting NHS waiting times down in the 2000s. The task force is a great opportunity to learn lessons from that period."

Rishi Sunak last night promised that the task force would bring together "the best and the brightest" from the NHS and private sector to bust backlogs, promising to leave "no stone unturned" in looking for ways to improve care.

After handing the NHS a £3.3 billion boost next year, Sunak is under pressure from Tory MPs to find further efficiencies in the health service and promised to "make sure that money is going to be well spent".

Speaking after the first meeting of the task force, he said: "We're going to do all of the things that are necessary to make sure that money reduces waiting times."

The most recent figures show that about 6 per cent of NHS treatment was carried out in the private sector, and ministers want to see how much that can be expanded, with recommendations due early next year.

Sir James Mackey, NHS England's director of elective recovery, said: "By maximising opportunities to deliver even more life-saving checks and tests, building on the successes of increasing use of the independent sector since the pandemic, we can speed up diagnoses and continue to bring down waiting lists for routine care."

Raab's long-awaited bill of rights seems doomed again

Matt Dathan Home Affairs Editor

Dominic Raab's bill of rights may be ditched again as Rishi Sunak has decided to prioritise legislation to tackle small boats, The Times has learnt.

Sunak is understood to have told the deputy prime minister this week that he has "deprioritised" the long-awaited overhaul of the Human Rights Act. However, Raab is "fighting back", a government source said, and is trying to convince the prime minister that the bill is crucial, arguing that several other proposed laws "hinge" on his reforms.

Government sources said Sunak had concluded that the government did not have enough time or "political capital" to pass both the bill of rights and separate legislation he is planning to overhaul the "broken" asylum system and combat the Channel migrant crisis.

The small boats legislation is being spearheaded by Suella Braverman, the home secretary, and is expected to be unveiled in the new year.

There are also concerns that the rights bill, which was dropped by Liz Truss, over concerns that it was "a mess", will be blocked by the Lords.

It is understood that elements of the bill that aimed to make it easier to deport foreign criminals and illegal migrants will be incorporated into the small boats legislation. Some of the remaining parts could be incorporated into other government legislation.

A Downing Street source said that Raab's job was "bigger than the bill of rights" and that he and Sunak were "working together on priorities".

One source speculated about a No 10 plot to force Raab to resign before more damaging reports can emerge about bullying, which he denies. "They hope Raab will decide to quit on principle," they said. "It's his baby, it would be pretty humiliating for him to lose the bill of rights again."

A Downing Street spokesman said: "We'll come forward with plans for legislation in the usual way."

Hancock gets out of parliament in face of local anger



In Matt Hancock's letter to Rishi Sunak, right, the former health secretary — and I'm a Celebrity ... Get Me Out of Here! contestant — stressed his belief that Conservatives can "reconnect" with voters away from parliament

Geraldine Scott Political Reporter
Henry Zeffman
Associate Political Editor

Matt Hancock has announced he will not stand at the next general election after some of his local Conservative Party members said he was "not fit" to represent them.

The former health secretary said he wanted to discover a "whole new world of possibilities" outside politics instead of facing a deselection battle in the West Suffolk constituency he has represented since 2010.

Hancock is back in Westminster after finishing third on the ITV reality television programme *I'm a Celebrity ... Get Me Out of Here!*

He had the Conservative whip removed over his decision to take part in the show, filmed in Australia.

Hancock, 44, said in a letter to Rishi Sunak that Simon Hart, the Tories' chief whip, had "made clear he would restore the whip in due course". But he added that being returned to the party "is now not necessary".

He wrote: "The Conservative Party must now reconnect with the public we serve. There was a time when I thought the only way to influence the public debate was in parliament but I've realised there's far more to it than that. I have increasingly come to believe that for a healthy democracy we must find new ways to reach people — especially those who are disengaged with politics.

"The revival of modern conservatism over the next decade will I suspect take place as much outside parliament as in it." He added: "For my part, I want to do things differently, I have discovered a whole new world of possibilities which I am excited to explore — new ways for me to communicate with people of all ages and from all backgrounds."

In a video on his TikTok page, Hancock told viewers: "Until the next



Matt Hancock is greeted by Gina Coladangelo on leaving the jungle

election I will serve all of my constituents and ensure they have their voice in parliament."

He then posted a video of himself singing the Queen song *I Want to Break Free*.

After the announcement it emerged that members of the West Suffolk Conservative Association had written to Hart informing him that they did not want Hancock to be their MP.

The Newmarket Journal reported that Terry Wood, the association president, wrote to Hart: "I have been instructed by the officers group of West Suffolk Conservatives Association to write to you and advise you of the following.

"At an officers group meeting held on November 30 a vote was taken that ruled that the officer group have no confidence in Matt Hancock as our sitting MP and we would request that the whip is not restored to him.

"This vote was brought about following feedback from the constituents in West Suffolk, advising that by virtue of recent events, they consider Matt Hancock not fit to represent this constituency."

Lance Stanbury, a Conservative councillor for the Rows ward on West Suffolk council, said that the letter had not been sent with the authority of the constituency. He told The Times: "I'm a member of the executive of the West Suffolk association and no one has approached any executive council members for their opinion."

Hancock has not yet announced what he will do after leaving parliament. Earlier this year he registered a not-for-profit organisation of which he is the sole director. The Centre for Neurodiversity is described in Hancock's register of interests as an organisation that "aims to further the cause of identifying and supporting those with neurodiverse conditions".

A political ally of Hancock said: "There are lots of irons in the fire but Matt will now look to use his public profile to highlight the serious issues he cares about — such as dyslexia. While Matt's time in the jungle was a success, he won't be doing any more reality TV."

Hancock becomes the 15th Tory MP to announce that they will not be standing at the next election. Others include Sajid Javid, Dehenna Davison and Chloe Smith.

It was disclosed last week that he had been paid £45,000 to appear on another reality programme, *Celebrity SAS: Who Dares Wins*. His fee for *I'm a Celebrity* is understood to be significantly more. He has said that he will donate a portion of the proceeds to charity.

What the Tories could learn from Corbyn, David Aaronovitch, page 31

£330,000-a-month gene project chaos

George Greenwood
Investigations Reporter

A government IT system behind the NHS's flagship genetic medicine project was so dysfunctional that staff had to use paper forms to make parts of it work, internal reports reveal.

In 2018, Matt Hancock, then health secretary, started a project for the NHS to sequence 500,000 patient genomes. The system that underpins this, allowing clinicians to order tests and review results, is the National Genomics Informatics System (NGIS).

Reports released by NHS England after a 15-month transparency battle reveal that the NGIS suffered a litany of failures. Relations between staff collaborating on the project broke down so much that they were swearing at each other on internal messaging platforms.

The review found that Genomics England and the NHS had failed to work together, with teams "operating in silos". Delays cost taxpayers at least £330,000 a month to retain developers. The team achieved a "minimum viable product" with paper ordering forms. The programme had "key functionality gaps", including a need to enter results into two different systems each time, described as a "potential clinical risk" through mistyping or data corruption.

The delays meant that when the government signed a £123 million contract with the US genomics company Illumina, to provide testing services to underpin the new NHS Genomic Medicine Service, the system had defects. The contract was controversial — The Times reported that it was awarded without competition after a meeting at a conference between David Cameron, the former prime minister who worked for Illumina, Hancock, and the company's chief executive.

Cameron, who had lobbied Hancock to attend the conference, denied any involvement in the contracting process. Illumina said at the time that it "always follows the correct and necessary process in its negotiations with customers".

NHS England refused repeatedly over 15 months to disclose the records after a request by The Times in June 2021, before being ordered to disclose them by the Information Commissioner's Office, the transparency regulator. The disclosure order described the lack of transparency as inexcusable.

A spokesman for NHS England and Genomics England said: "The NHS is the first health system in the world to offer whole-genome sequencing as part of routine clinical care.

"This report, produced in 2019, does not reflect the significant changes made to the service and technology since then, with both the NHS and Genomics England acting on recommendations and making ongoing changes to the whole genome sequencing service before it launched in 2020.

"To date, the service has sequenced more than 30,000 whole genomes, helping NHS clinicians to transform the lives of thousands of families, delivering faster and more accurate diagnoses for patients with life-threatening conditions including cancer and rare genetic disorders, and enhancing England's status as a world-leading centre for life sciences."

Quentin Letts

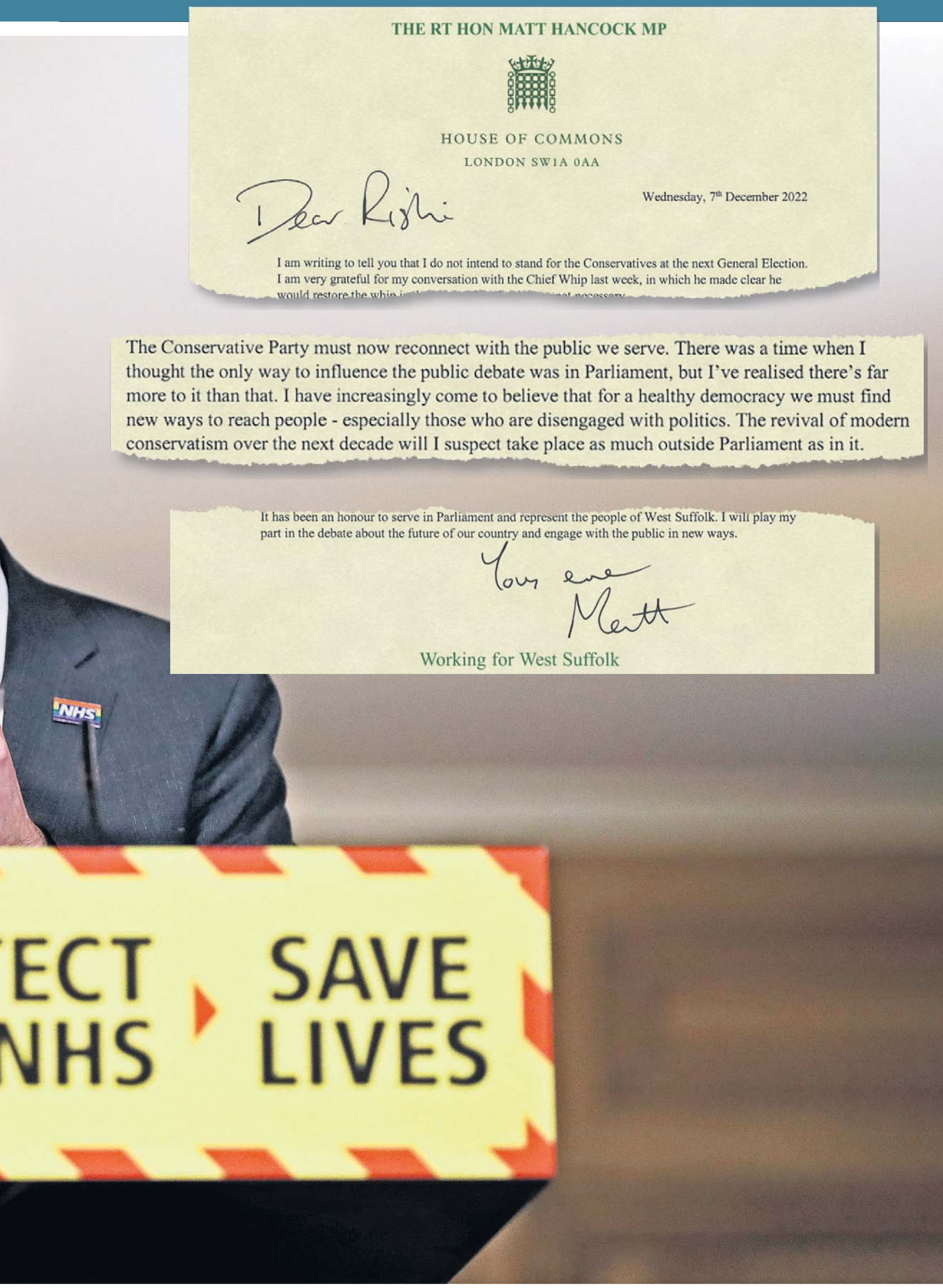
Mr Frisky leaves jungle before a fond farewell

Political Sketch



Matt Hancock (Ind, West Suffolk), the housewives' Mr Frisky, entered the Commons chamber at a trot. Up the stairs he bounded, pumping those titanium thighs. The place was already pretty full before PMQs but Hancock is always a leap ahead. He had reserved a spot three rows behind Rishi Sunak. The camera would find him. Always does.

A week earlier he was still in Australia after his jungle TV turn. Few MPs had had a chance to see him since his transformation into a six-figure vaudeville celeb. Welcome me back, guys! Easing himself along the row of seated colleagues, Hancock patted and clasped old muckers by shoulder and elbow — the likes of Julian Lewis, Bob Blackman, Sir Bob Neill and Louie French. None of them had asked to be greeted thus and he drew a line of blanks. South Cambridgeshire's Anthony Browne rewarded him with a greeting and Matt Warman


THE RT HON MATT HANCOCK MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Wednesday, 7th December 2022

Dear Rishi

I am writing to tell you that I do not intend to stand for the Conservatives at the next General Election. I am very grateful for my conversation with the Chief Whip last week, in which he made clear he would restore the whip ...

The Conservative Party must now reconnect with the public we serve. There was a time when I thought the only way to influence the public debate was in Parliament, but I've realised there's far more to it than that. I have increasingly come to believe that for a healthy democracy we must find new ways to reach people - especially those who are disengaged with politics. The revival of modern conservatism over the next decade will I suspect take place as much outside Parliament as in it.

It has been an honour to serve in Parliament and represent the people of West Suffolk. I will play my part in the debate about the future of our country and engage with the public in new ways.

Yours ever

Matt

Working for West Suffolk

(Boston & Skegness) was friendly. The rest turned shoulders. Envy? Or self-absorption? Many MPs are interested only in people who can be useful to them. An hour later Hancock announced that he would be leaving the Commons. Off he scoots. There will be another like him before long. It was Stephen Flynn's first PMQs as leader of the Scots Nats' Westminster contingent. Ian Blackford, his predecessor, sat behind him and made a show of shaking his hand. Flynn (Aberdeen South) hailed Blackford as "a giant of Scottish independence". As soon as the house heard "giant" it laughed, for Blackford is not one of life's greyhounds. Nearby sat Kirsten Oswald (SNP, East Renfrewshire), who has been replaced as deputy leader by the high-wire artiste Mhairi Black (Paisley). Oswald looked cheesed-off.

Flynn's performance was delivered without notes and was therefore brisker and felt more authentic than anything read off a script. There is a coiled violence to him that is different from the gaseousness of Blackford. As PMQs questions ended, a Conservative partisan shouted "six-nil". Speaker Hoyle retorted something along the lines of "you must have been watching a different match from the rest of us, chum", and he had a point. Sunak and Sir Keir Starmer had indeed had six bashes at each other but the score was arguably only 3-1 to Sunak, with two exchanges being drawn. Beyond Westminster these bouts have limited significance. Few voters watch. Even so, failure for a third week in succession will sting Starmer. He will wonder how better to get a grip on his elusive, hair-oiled opponent.

Starmer's first question sought to spear Sunak on housing targets. The PM neatly quoted a remark by a Labour frontbencher that supported the government. Starmer persisted with two more housing questions but he had been winded by that opening sally and managed to refer to Chipping Barnet as "Chipping Barton". He tried insulting Sunak as "the blancmange prime minister" but the barb was not sufficiently teed up by earlier remarks. Labour's efforts to depict Sunak as a weakling have yet to work.

With his fourth question Starmer moved to the juicier matter of Lady "Fill Yer Booties" Mone, the noted philanthropist. Sunak tried disowning Mone but he was mocked for expressing his "absolute shock" at the scandal. He tried a clumsy pivot to the rail strikes but to no avail. Starmer had retrieved a goal.

In the penultimate exchange Starmer stayed with strikes before returning to Mone. That allowed Sunak to say he would introduce "new tough laws" on strikes. He didn't quite hit the announcement cleanly. Being generous to Starmer, we will say the ball hit the post.

Starmer's final question was about the strep-A throat bug. A confident leader of the opposition will sometimes play a nobly neutral card but this felt like a retreat to safety. PMQs is not yet a problem for Starmer but he could do with a three-pointer.

Green groups furious after coal mine approved

Adam Vaughan Environment Editor

Michael Gove has approved the first deep coalmine in 30 years, despite calls from environmental activists and Labour to turn down the project.

The levelling-up secretary's planning approval for the mine in Cumbria comes after two years of opposition. Critics said that it would increase emissions and 85 per cent of the coking coal would be exported to produce steel.

Lord Deben, chairman of the climate change committee, said the scheme was "absolutely indefensible". Alok Sharma, who was president of the Cop26 climate conference in Glasgow last year, has said that the approval would damage Britain's international reputation.

Ed Miliband, the shadow climate minister, said that the mine was a "terrible idea" from an economic and environmental perspective.

West Cumbria Mining says Woodhouse Colliery near Whitehaven will create more than 500 jobs. Cumbria county council had given approval before ministers called in the decision last year.

Gove's approval comes after the decision was delayed three times. The most recent deadline was during the Cop27 climate conference in Egypt last month, when approval would have been internationally embarrassing while the UK was pressing for a phase-out of coal at the UN talks.

In a letter explaining his decision, Gove said he had backed the project due to the economic benefits and the creation of an indigenous supply of coking coal for the UK steel industry.

The minister argued that the mine would have a "broadly neutral effect" on global greenhouse gas emissions. He said that the mine's operational emissions would be lower than similar ones around the world.

He added that it was consistent with "government policies for meeting the challenge of climate change".

The mine will produce 2.8 million tonnes of coal each year for steel production, rather than burning in power stations, which has almost been phased out in the UK. Nonetheless, the coal has been estimated to release 420 million tonnes of CO_2 if the mine runs for 50 years, roughly on a par with total UK emissions over a year.



British Steel, one of the country's two remaining primary steel producers, has ruled out using the coal because of its high sulphur content, leaving only Tata Steel as a potential customer.

Green groups and scientists condemned the approval. Tony Bosworth, a campaigner at Friends of the Earth, said: "This is an appalling decision. Approving this mine is a misguided and deeply damaging mistake that flies in the face of all the evidence."

The countryside charity CPRE said that it was an "absurdly retrograde decision".

Doug McNeall, a climate scientist at the Met Office, said the project would "make it a little harder to hit net zero and stop climate change".

An official at Gove's department said: "The mine seeks to be net zero in its operations and is expected to contribute to local employment and the wider economy."

The government's approval of the mine comes after ministers relaxed planning rules on Tuesday for onshore wind farms. The move was perceived in some quarters as an attempt to neuter claims that the support for coal undermined its climate change goals.

Deal to import twice as much gas from the US

The US is set to double its gas exports to the UK under plans to reduce the cost of living by weaning Britain off Russian energy.

Rishi Sunak said the "joint action group" to boost security, efficiency and affordability would ensure that the UK's supplies could "never again be manipulated" by a "failing regime".

Although the immediate goal is to stabilise markets and reduce demand, officials also want to accelerate the shift to clean alternatives. This will involve promoting nuclear fuels, developing clean hydrogen, and international investment in offshore wind and carbon capture.

The US will aim to export at least nine to ten billion cubic metres of liquefied natural gas to UK sites over the next year, more than doubling the amount last year. The initiative will be led by a new transatlantic group headed by officials from Westminster and the White House. The first meeting will be held virtually today. Sunak said that the partnership would help to end Europe's dependence on Russian energy "once and for all", and bring down bills.

"Together the UK and US will ensure the global price of energy and the security of our national supply can never again be manipulated by the whims of a failing regime," he said. "We have the natural resources, industry and innovative thinking we need to create a better, freer system and accelerate the clean energy transition."

Sunak and President Biden said in a joint statement that it was "more important than ever" for allies to work together to build "resilient international systems".

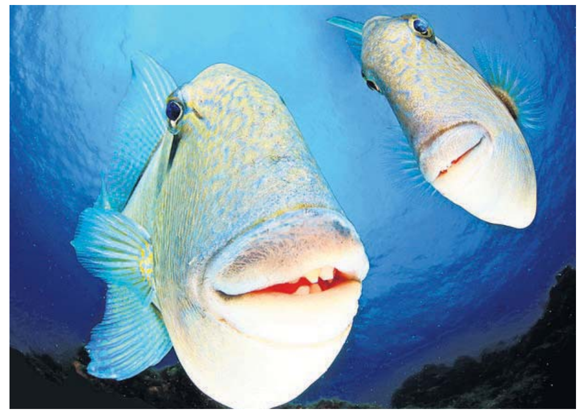
They said: "To this end, we are establishing a joint action group for energy security and affordability to accelerate our immediate co-operation on short-term action to support energy security and affordability in the United Kingdom and across Europe."

JEAN JACQUES ALCALAY; JENNIFER HADLEY; ARTURO TELLE THIEMANN





He's behind you A hippo yawning near an oblivious heron in South Africa was nominated for the Comedy Wildlife Photography Awards. Jennifer Hadley's shot of a lion cub losing its grip on a tree trunk in Tanzania won, ahead of a goofy close-up of triggerfish in the Azores



Middle classes stand accused of hogging prized apprenticeships

Nicola Woolcock Education Editor

Top apprenticeships are more elitist than degrees and are being colonised by the middle classes, a report says.

The research conducted by the London School of Economics and the University of Surrey for the Sutton Trust, a social mobility charity, shows that the overall number of apprenticeship starts declined sharply between 2015 and 2020.

Poorer school-leavers are particularly under-represented in higher-level apprenticeships, which are akin to an undergraduate or master's degree. The research shows that a higher proportion of students taking an ordinary degree had been on free school meals than had those who started a degree apprenticeship last year.

These apprenticeships are lucrative opportunities offered by employers, such as Rolls-Royce and PwC. Apprentices study at university but do not pay tuition fees and are paid a salary and are usually guaranteed a job when they qualify.

The Sutton Trust said that only 5 per cent of those starting a degree apprenticeship in 2020-21 were from lower income homes, compared with 6.7 per cent of those going to university. It said this suggested that higher-level apprenticeships were less accessible than the university route for those from disadvantaged families.

The share of apprenticeships of all levels, in the most deprived areas of the country, decreased from 26 per cent to 20 per cent between 2015 and 2020, compared with an increase in affluent areas from 14 per cent to 18 per cent.

"More prosperous areas have benefited disproportionately from the expansion of degree apprenticeships," the report said. "Strikingly, higher and degree apprenticeships are not more common among disadvantaged individuals than a university degree. From this perspective, it is hard to see higher and degree apprenticeships as a route to widen opportunities for individuals from poorer backgrounds."

Overall, the number of apprenticeships fell by almost a quarter between 2017 and 2018. This was followed by an 18 per cent decline in apprenticeship starts during the pandemic, between the academic years 2018-19 and 2020-21. Starts for 2021-22 are still 11 per cent lower than three years earlier.

The decrease is mainly among lower-level apprenticeships; higher and degree apprenticeships have risen but young people have not benefited from that and nor have those from poorer homes. People aged over 25 account for the majority of those undertaking higher and degree apprenticeships.

"Those from low-income backgrounds are particularly under-represented in engineering and manufacturing, especially at higher levels," the report said. "This gap is especially noticeable within degree apprenticeships. These sectors are associated with high earnings returns, highlighting that those from low-income backgrounds are less able to access the most financially rewarding apprenticeships."

Sir Peter Lampl, founder of the Sutton Trust, said: "There are so few degree apprenticeships available that competition is inevitably fierce — and the sharp-elbowed middle classes have the edge when it comes to supporting their kids in that contest.

"The application process is hard to navigate. Opportunities are advertised at different times and they aren't posted in a central, easy-to-access place. Young people from better-off homes tend to have more support from their families and so can be better placed to know when and where to find apprenticeships, as well as how to deliver a polished performance at interview.

"But the bigger issue is how few apprenticeships are going to under-25s. Many big employers use their apprenticeship levy budget to fund apprenticeships for their senior staff. If the government wants to deliver on its skills agenda, the levy has to be reformed to ensure these opportunities go to those who would benefit most."

Lord Baker of Dorking, a former education secretary, said: "The problem is that many schools are not set up to help children get degree apprenticeships, they don't have the contacts in the real world. There aren't the number of new opportunities available that you would wish." He said that the government should offer financial incentives to smaller businesses to offer apprenticeships, by paying half of the salary.

Baker added that companies using the apprenticeship levy to take on workers in low-skilled roles were not helping to close the country's skills gap.

Annalee Macfarlane, 19, got three A*s in her A-levels at Portsmouth High School and offers from four universities. Instead she started a degree apprenticeship with Rolls-Royce. Now she is studying electronic engineering at Warwick University one day a week while working the other four. She earns a salary and will qualify with a degree.

She said: "I knew I wanted to go into engineering and this way I can get practical, hands-on experience as well as knowledge and a degree."

She says the only downside is that she has 33 days holiday a year, generous for staff but not students. It was also hard to find openings, which took persistence and "a lot of googling".

Better access to skills training is needed, leading article, page 35

Behind the story

The first national apprenticeship system of training started in 1563, according to a report in the House of Commons library. In those days apprenticeships lasted seven years (Nicola Woolcock writes).

By the start of the 20th century there were a third of a million apprentices and in the 1960s, a third of boys left school to take up apprenticeships.

After decades of decline new schemes have sought to revive apprenticeships but have also wrangled over what they actually mean and whether they can apply across all industries.

The apprenticeship levy, introduced in 2016, compels all employers with a salary bill of more than £3 million to spend 0.5 per cent of it on apprenticeships (or forfeit the money).

Some companies have been criticised for using this levy to rebrand low-skill roles or to pay for executive training for middle-aged managers.

Degree apprenticeships, also set up in 2016, have been welcomed by companies, parents, schools and universities that are involved in the training. Ucas, the university admissions service, is trying to create a one-stop shop so that school-leavers can apply for apprenticeships alongside degrees.

Roles are currently available as nuclear scientists, civil engineers, chartered surveyors and project managers.

However, there were 43,000 degree apprenticeship starts in 2021 compared with almost 500,000 British people starting at university and they are particularly scant in some areas of the country.

Buffer zones for abortion clinics legal

Jonathan Ames Legal Editor

Buffer zones around abortion clinics in Northern Ireland are legal, the country's most senior judges have ruled.

Seven Supreme Court judges said yesterday that a bill in Northern Ireland that allowed for the creation of "safe access zones" did not breach the rights of anti-abortion protesters.

The proposed legislation had been referred to the court by Dame Brenda King, Northern Ireland's attorney-general. She was concerned that it might breach freedom of speech provisions under human rights legislation.

In a unanimous ruling the judges ruled that the bill was not incompatible with the rights to freedom of conscience, assembly and expression of protesters as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights.

Giving the lead ruling, Lord Reed, the court's president, said: "The right of women in Northern Ireland to access abortion services has been established in law. That right should not be obstructed or impaired by the accommodation of claims by opponents of the legislation based, some might think ironically, on the liberal values protected by the convention."

Reed said a legal system that "enabled those who had lost the political debate to undermine the legislation permitting abortion, by relying on freedom of conscience, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly would, in practice, align the law with the values of the opponents of reform and deprive women of the protection of rights which have been legislatively enacted".

An Abortion Services Safe Access Zones Bill has been proposed for Scotland and an amendment to the government's Public Order Bill that would create a similar system in England and Wales was approved by MPs in October by 297 votes to 110. Suella Braverman, the home secretary, and Kemi Badenoch, the international trade secretary, voted against the amendment.

Two arrested for 'attempted burglary' near Sterling home

David Brown
David Woode Crime Correspondent

Two men have been arrested on suspicion of attempted burglary in an incident in the village where the footballer Raheem Sterling lives, police said.

Surrey Police said they received a report of "suspicious activity" in Oxshott, Leatherhead, at 6.40pm on Tuesday.

The force initially said it was investigating whether there was a possible link between the arrests and the break-in reported at Sterling's mansion, where jewellery and watches, said to be worth £300,000, were stolen. But Surrey Police clarified that the arrests "are not being linked to an ongoing investigation into a burglary which received significant media coverage over the weekend".

It said: "That separate investigation remains ongoing and as of 12pm on December 7 no arrests have been made."

Sterling, the Chelsea winger, was said to be "shaken" by the news and was concerned for the wellbeing of his partner, Paige Milian, 27, and their two young children. They had been in Qatar for the group stages of the World Cup.

Sterling missed England's 3-0 victory over Senegal on Sunday after flying home. Shortly before kick-off, the Football Association said Sterling would not be available for selection against Senegal because of a "family matter".

Gareth Southgate, the England manager, yesterday had four players missing from the team's training base at Al Wakra. There is still no news on when Sterling will return.

The midfielder Declan Rice, 23, has an undisclosed illness but is expected back. The forward Callum Wilson, 30, is recovering from a minor muscle strain.

Ben White, 25, the defender, left the team hotel last week to return home to deal with a "personal issue", the details of which have not been made public. There was initial confusion about the circumstances of the burglary at Sterling's home after a source claimed that armed assailants raided the gated property while his partner and children were inside.

Surrey Police dismissed claims about threats of violence, saying that Sterling's family had returned from abroad, "discovered a number of items . . . had been stolen", and reported it to the police at about 9pm on Saturday.

Sterling reportedly spoke to Surrey officers on Monday about the break-in at his home.

He has twice been targeted by thieves in the past two years. Three men tried to raid his former home in Goostrey, Cheshire, in November 2020. A court was told that the burglars activated an alarm system and fled the property empty handed.

Three men were jailed in 2020 for targeting the homes of Sterling and other celebrities including Jay Kay, the frontman of the British acid jazz group Jamiroquai.

In the incident on Tuesday, a police helicopter and a dog unit were dispatched along with a team from the British Transport Police.

England stars hope to reign in the rain

David Brown Al Wakrah

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHERS MARC ASPLAND AND JACK HILL; EDDIE KEOGH/THE FA/GETTY IMAGES



England have welcomed the possibility of rain at the quarter-final against France as the area around the stadium was hit by a tornado, flooding and hailstones yesterday.

The storm struck Ras Laffan, about ten miles north of Al Khor, where the team meets on Saturday. Qatar has only 8.8 days of rain a year on average and there had not been a drop since the England team arrived three weeks ago.

Dark clouds also gathered over the England training camp at Al Wakrah, about 60 miles south.

Kyle Walker, 32, the England and Manchester City defender, said after training: "I would never have thought I would say I can't wait to see rain. It has been that long.

"Living in Manchester you see rain every day. It looked like it was going to rain when we were training outside so I am not surprised you said there was a tornado where the ground was.

"It can have a factor. France experiences rain as well, so both teams play in different weather conditions than what they have been used to over the last couple of weeks being out here."

He added: "I don't think that it's really going to make the difference between the two sides, a little bit of rain, if I'm going to be honest."

The Qatar Meteorological Department warned that the change in weather "coincides with the entry of Al-Marb'aannyeh which indicates the beginning of the severity of winter and lasts about 40 days". This means temperatures could fall to a minimum of 15C and reach a maximum of 26C.

Walker faces the France striker Kylian Mbappé, 23, widely regarded as the best player at the World Cup.

He said: "The game is not England v Mbappé. The game is England v France. We respect that he's a good player and in good form at the minute but I'm not going to roll out the red carpet for him and tell him to go and score.

"I am representing my country in the quarter-final of the World Cup. It is do or die. If we lose, we go home, and he is not going to stand in the way of hopefully winning the World Cup for my country."

Qatar has relaxed its visa rules to allow more foreign fans to enter the country during the knock-out stages but as few as 3,500 supporters from England are expected in the 69,000-capacity stadium.

Mbappé, 23, is the highest scoring player at the World Cup so far with five goals.

Walker said: "France and England have always been a great game and a great battle. I think you are going to get another one on Saturday."

Walker has befriended a stray cat called Dave at the team hotel. "Dave is fine," he said yesterday. "Hopefully I can stick to my promise that he will come home with us if we were to win the World Cup."

Gianni Infantino, president of Fifa, hailed the group stages of the World Cup as "the best ever". He made no reference to the protests at Fifa's ban on captains wearing rainbow armbands to promote LGBT equality, the discrimination against women in Qatar or mistreatment of migrant workers.

Victor Montagliani, the Fifa vice-president, said that the Qatar finals may be the last World Cup to be held in a single nation.

"It cements ties with your neighbours politically and economically, and it's easier to go to a government when they're not carrying the whole load," he explained.

The 2026 tournament will be held across Canada, the US and Mexico.

The Game, pullout







Harry Kane and team train at Al Wakrah, along with Eric Dier left. Kyle Walker, far left, says Saturday's match is "do or die". Argentina fans in Doha pay homage to stars past and present

News

Our top web searches reveal puzzling trends

Mark Sellman
Technology Correspondent

This year may have involved war, inflation, the Queen's death and political turmoil but the British obsession with puzzles trumped them all, according to our Google searches.

Wordle was the top trending search of the past 12 months, outperforming the World Cup, Queen Elizabeth and Ukraine. Wordle's harder spin-off, Quordle, also made the top ten.

Wordle, which asks people to guess a five-letter word each day, surged in popularity at the start of the year. It was developed by a Welsh software engineer, Josh Wardle, for his wife, who loved to play word games. The game has since been bought by The New York Times. Quordle is harder, with players having to guess four five-letter words at the same time to win.

"Lateral flow test" was the only Covid-related entry in the main list of searches, reflecting how the pandemic has receded from daily consciousness.

After the Queen, the footballer Mason Greenwood, serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer and actor Johnny Depp were among the individuals who piqued our curiosity most. Greenwood, a Manchester United player, is facing a rape trial: the subject of Dahmer has been resurrected by a Netflix documentary; and Depp was caught up in a lengthy court battle with his ex-wife Amber Heard this year.

Google builds its lists by identifying the top trending search queries,those that have a big increase in traffic over a sustained period compared with last year. Elizabeth II and her funeral were the subject of three of the top four trending questions of the year.

In entertainment, Diana Ross's appearance at Glastonbury left fans scrambling to ask how old she was, while the Disney film *Encanto* was the top trending film search of the year, with *Stranger Things* the top TV show.

Matt Cooke, head of Google News Lab, said: "This year's list reflects emotions experienced. Among the extreme highs and lows, including national mourning and geopolitical instability, it's humbling to see that a game like Wordle supplied comfort alongside family favourites like *Encanto* and Eurovision that provide a common thread to bring the nation together."

NICHOLAS T ANSELL/PA; DISNEY/AP; NETFLIX









Diana Ross, 78, Queen Elizabeth II, Encanto and Stranger Things all featured among the top Google searches

The big questions

Total
Wordle
World Cup
Queen Elizabeth
Ukraine
Lateral flow test
Mason Greenwood
Russia
Quordle
Jeffrey Dahmer
Johnny Depp



News Events
Queen Elizabeth passing
Ukraine
Monkeypox
Storm Eunice
Nato
Omicron symptoms
Johnny Depp/Amber Heard
Train strikes
Elizabeth Line
Cost of living payment



Questions
Is the Queen dead?
When is the Queen's funeral?
Why is Russia invading Ukraine?
Where will the Queen be buried?
How old is Diana Ross?
What happens when the Queen dies?
When is Father's Day?
When does the World Cup start?
What is Nato?
How did Jamal Edwards die?

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Yellow alert for ice and snow across more of UK

The Met Office has extended a yellow weather warning for today and tomorrow as freezing conditions, nicknamed the Troll of Trondheim after the city in Norway, are set to last for at least a week (Peter Chappell writes).

Arctic air moved south yesterday to leave most of the country in its grip by this morning. Temperatures in some places are likely to drop to as low as minus 10C. The Met Office has extended its yellow weather warning for snow and ice to cover more of the UK. It now covers most of Scotland, Wales and much of the east and northeast of England.

Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London, has activated the emergency protocol for the capital, where temperatures could reach minus 3C, meaning that emergency accommodation will be provided for homeless people.

Grahame Madge of the Met Office said: "We are in this pattern for seven days at least. We could see it continue for a while longer, there's uncertainty in the evolution and how long it will last.

"However, the pattern for the next seven days is that it will remain cold and we will see double-digit minus figures overnight in areas that are prone to frosts and areas where there is lying snow."

EUAN CHERRY



Snow covers Corgarff Castle, in Aberdeenshire, yesterday. Arctic air is forecast to cover most of the country today

Five-day forecast Source: Met Office

(min nightime temp in brackets)

	Today	Tomorrow	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
South	3C (-2C)	3C (-2C)	3C (-2C)	2C (0C)	3C (0C)
North	1C (-3C)	2C (-2C)	2C (-2C)	1C (-2C)	2C (-1C)

There was no expectation of widespread heavy snow, but wintry showers were expected during the cold spell, particularly on higher ground and by the coast.

Cold air from the north tended to contain less moisture, meaning less cloud cover and therefore lower overnight temperatures.

Madge said that although this will be a cold snap, it will not be as tough as the "hard December" of 2010.

A major incident was declared in Sheffield when about 2,000 homes in the suburb of Stannington were left without gas for five days as overnight temperatures plummeted.

More than 100 engineers were working on the problem caused when a burst water main damaged a gas pipe on Friday, sending hundreds of thousands of litres of water into the gas network.

In London the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol was activated for the first time this winter to provide accommodation for rough sleepers. Khan is also concerned that the rising cost of living is forcing more people onto the streets.

Weather forecast, page 65

I was sexually assaulted in public, says comedian

Emma Yeomans

Shaparak Khorsandi, the TV comedian, has spoken out about being sexually assaulted by a man in public.

Khorsandi, 49, an award-winning comic who has appeared on *Live at the Apollo* and *Mock the Week*, has spoken out about her experience of reporting a sexual assault to police, and the length of time it took to get justice.

She said on Twitter that it had taken two years to achieve the conviction, during which time she had decided not to waive anonymity, adding: "I felt the law had dealt with him."

The man was found guilty in September and sentenced in October, she said, but is appealing against the verdict.

She wrote: "It was the most minor category of sexual assault yet it has been really difficult. My heart goes out to those who suffer worse and have to see the CPS powerless to help because they are so underfunded."

Khorsandi, whose second novel *Kissing Emma* came out last year, said she had feared the impact reporting the assault would have on her career and was also worried about the stress of a trial. "But the thought of him thinking what he did was 'normal' and 'just a laugh' became debilitating," she said.

The Metropolitan Police were "brilliant", she added.

She described her fear that sexual assaults were going unpunished due to the cost of investigating and securing a conviction, adding: "What happened to me happened publicly so it was pretty straightforward.

"I know two people who were raped but the CPS, though sympathetic, did not feel there was enough evidence for decent chance of a conviction."

While convictions for rape have risen in the past year, fewer than 2 per cent of all rapes reported to the police result in a conviction, according to CPS data.

In October, a trial of specialist rape courts began at three locations, in which all court staff were given training in trauma and victims provided with access to specialist sexual assault support workers.

The pilot courtrooms are designed to drive up convictions, with the then justice minister Dominic Raab saying he hoped every woman would have confidence in the justice system. Khorsandi has previously said sexual harassment is "endless" in comedy. She said she had once been greeted with "Look out, stripper's here" while attending a funeral, and that groping was common.

But she had previously stayed quiet thanks to "ladette" culture, she told a comedy podcast in 2020.

She said: "That was what the whole 'ladette' culture sold to us. So we never verbalised the horrible stuff that was going on, not even to our closest friends. We were all meant to just laugh it off or drink it off."

On one occasion, she arrived backstage at a comedy gig while in her early twenties.

"They're all men," she said, "and this male comedian went, 'Oh, here she is! I'll get the knife, you get the duct tape. Oi you! Open the boot.'"

A bystander who stood up for her was mocked for intervening, she added.



Shaparak Khorsandi felt that she had to "laugh off" abuse

Actress tells of awkward Affair scenes

Charlotte Wace

Ruth Wilson, the British actress who quit *The Affair* without explanation, has said she would have welcomed an intimacy co-ordinator on the television series because "people are uncomfortable talking about sex".

Wilson, 40, surprised the entertainment industry when she abruptly left the popular US drama in 2018.

She has previously said her decision was not because a male co-star was being paid more and declined to discuss the matter further, citing legal reasons.

But later reports claimed that Wilson's exit was due in part to the frequency and nature of her sex scenes.

Asked if an intimacy co-ordinator would have made a difference, Wilson told Radio Times: "Yes, I think so because people are uncomfortable talking about sex. An intimacy co-ordinator can mediate between the actors and the director.

"If you just leave the actors to get on with it often the camera doesn't get the right shot. At best it feels awkward and at worst …" She added: "It's important to have someone you can talk to about your concerns, your worries or limits, things you don't want to show."

Intimate scenes are now commonly choreographed by the co-ordinators.

Vardy writer's own tax trial helped script

David Sanderson Arts Correspondent

The writer of the forthcoming television drama based on the Rebekah Vardy and Colleen Rooney "Wagatha Christie" case has revealed that his own courtroom "humiliation" helped inform the script.

Chris Atkins was jailed in 2016 for tax evasion over the funding of his 2009 production *Starsuckers*. "The trial was far worse than prison for me," he told this week's Radio Times. "The shame and humiliation is extremely public. I've been ripped apart by a very skilled barrister for several days, so I came to this feeling huge sympathy and respect for both of them [Rooney and Vardy]."

Vardy v Rooney: A Courtroom Drama, which is due to be broadcast by Channel 4 on December 20, is based on the real battle between the two women, whose partners are the former England football team-mates, Jamie Vardy and Wayne Rooney.

Vardy, 41, sued Rooney, 36, for libel after her rival described carrying out a "sting operation" to discover who was leaking information to The Sun.

Mrs Justice Karen Steyn ruled in July that Vardy's evidence was "manifestly inconsistent … evasive or implausible". It left Vardy facing a legal bill of more than £2 million.

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Christmas will be hard, say Dame Deborah's family

Benjamin Barraclough

The first Christmas without Deborah James will be "very hard", her mother has said.

James, who set up a fund for cancer research after being diagnosed with bowel cancer and referred to herself as Bowelbabe, gave hope to others in her podcast *You, Me and the Big C*. She died in June at the age of 40.

The mother of two had started the BBC podcast with Lauren Mahon, 37, and Rachael Bland, who also died at the age of 40 in September 2018.

In her final months James raised almost £7 million. In recognition of her efforts, she was delivered a damehood in person by Prince William.

Her mother, Heather James, whose Instagram handle is "bowelgran", spoke on the ITV programme *Lorraine* yesterday about how she would cope on her first Christmas without her daughter.

"It's very hard," she told Lorraine Kelly, the host. "I think it's hard for anybody who has lost anybody but Deborah loved Christmas. She was so into it.

"The build-up to it, the enthusiasm, the sparkles, and have I got that energy? I try for her. Part of me would like to not do it but that's not what she wanted."

Her mother, 65, said she had tried to recreate James's Christmas traditions with her family.

"We tried to make table decorations last week and I did it with my other daughter and my future daughter-in-law," she said. "We cracked open the champagne. I drank most of it.

"I knew Deborah would say: 'Mum, that's great that you're doing this.' But it's putting the effort into [this] … part of me would like to just hide and not do it.

"That's not what we're going to do. We're going to celebrate Deborah."

Heather James, a former gymnastic coach, is a champion of the NoButts activists who raise awareness of bowel cancer. The group works with Serious Tissues, which produces recycled lavatory paper, to inform people about the key symptoms of the disease.

She said her daughter had a "great legacy" which included a report released in August showing record numbers of people having checks for bowel cancer. Between the months of May and July this year, 170,500 people were referred for checks for suspected lower gastro-intestinal cancers. This was 30,000 more than the same period last year and nearly 80,000 higher than the same period two years ago.

In August, James's book *How to Live When You Could Be Dead*, which was released posthumously, debuted at No 1 in the UK charts. The publishers donated £3 from the sale of each hardback copy to cancer research.

James, a former deputy head teacher, was diagnosed in 2016 and kept her million Instagram followers up to date with her treatment.

She said in early May this year that she had stopped her treatment and was receiving end-of-life care at her parents' home in Woking, Surrey.

Her husband Sebastien, the father of their two children, Hugo and Eloise, told The Times that those final weeks had been some of the most "magical days of both our lives".

He said: "Even through the darkest times … we could still find moments of joy and escape to RHS Wisley at the crack of dawn to buy trees for the children and family to plant in her memory."

Shortly before her death she was made a dame. Boris Johnson, prime minister at the time, said: "If ever an honour was richly deserved, this is it."



Heather James shares a cake with her daughter, Dame Deborah, last year

TMS

diary@thetimes.co.uk | @timesdiary

A bluff too far for quiz 'cheat'

It has been 20 years since the *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* cheating scandal, but Victoria Coren Mitchell, who hosts the less fixable quiz *Only Connect*, thinks that Major Charles Ingram, the alleged beneficiary of helpful coughs, was the victim of an injustice. She once appeared on a celebrity poker programme with Ingram and watched as he flipped over his hand and admitted he had been bluffing. "But there is still one card to be dealt," said the dealer. "Oh, I see," replied the major, who then turned his cards over and went all in. "I don't think he was clever enough to come up with the scam," VCM says.

Coren Mitchell, below, tells Richard Herring's podcast that she has been going through her teenage diaries with amusement. They read like any other girl's, with sudden gear changes thanks to her famous father. At one point she wrote: "Everything's awful, I'm not popular, I've got no friends." The next she notes: "Went to Ned Sherrin's birthday party and the only person I talked to was Frankie Howerd." Poor thing.

NIGHY'S HEALTH ROUTINE

Bill Nighy once caused a public health scare with his acting. In *The Men's Room*, a 1991 television series, he played an athletic womaniser who had seven sex scenes with four different women. Nighy tells *Vanity Fair* that he knew his acting career had taken off beyond the TV critics when someone passed him the medical page of a newspaper and he read: "If you have a pacemaker or any heart issue, do not attempt the things Mr Nighy does on BBC2."



FRANCOIS WRITTEN OFF

Mark Francois, the EU-hating Conservative MP, surprised Westminster's snobbish literati by showing up at a reception for the all-party parliamentary writers' group (quite Guardianista only the moaning is more about royalties in the plural). Francois is, however, a fellow scribe. He self-published his Brexit epic *Spartan Victory* after it was rejected by 24 publishers, whom he accused of "Remainer bias". As opposed to remainder fear. He may have a point. As Francois sniffed around the room, presumably in search of a glass of something, one Labour figure was heard to mutter: "I think he's looking for crayons so he can colour in his latest book."

Richard Fairbrass, front man for the pop group Right Said Fred, owes his break to David Bowie, who let him play bass in the video for his 1984 single Blue Jean. *"If you want this job, you'll have to cut your ponytail off," Bowie told him at the audition. Fairbrass tells Record Collector that he replied: "I'll cut off anything to get this job." Fortunately that wasn't required or he would have had to sing* I'm Too Sexy *in a higher key.*

LIBERTÉ, ÉGALITÉ, HILARITÉ

A French Communist has won this year's Humour et Politique prize from the Press Club de France for a joke about fuel prices. Fabien Roussel, who came eighth in the presidential election, won for this cracker: "Petrol stations are the only places in France where the person holding the gun is also the person being robbed."

Last year's winner was Marlène Schiappa, former gender equality secretary, who insisted to the relief of colleagues in a debate on banning polygamy that: "We are not going to forbid threesomes."

Almost makes you glad of the quality of politicians we have.

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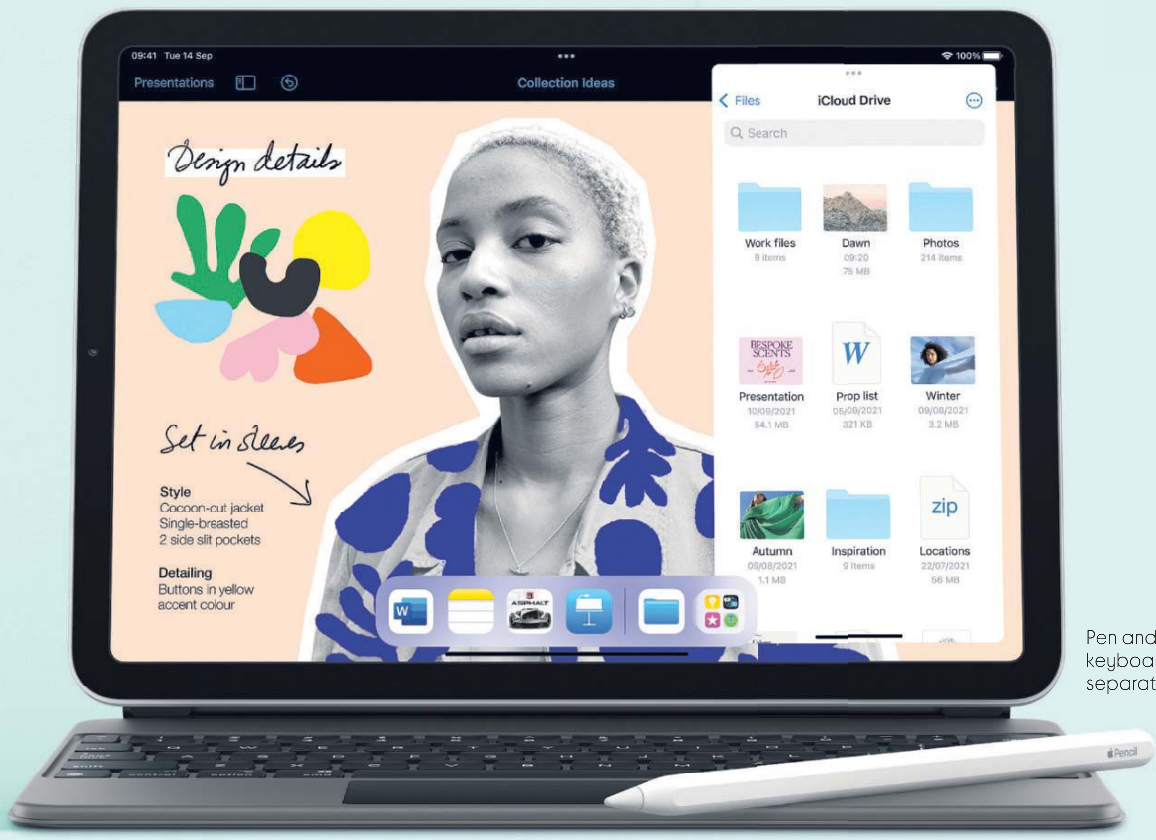
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Cornish second-home owners face double tax to tackle crisis

Will Humphries
Southwest Correspondent





St Ives has introduced a rule that all new-build properties must be principal residences. Gordon Ramsay spent lockdown in his Cornish second home

Second home owners in Cornwall are set to be charged twice the normal rate of council tax under a proposal to give the local authority more powers to raise income from out-of-towners.

Councils would also be given powers to charge a 100 per cent council tax premium on people who leave their properties empty for one year or more.

Cornwall council's scrutiny committee agreed in principle to the doubling of charges for both categories on Tuesday, and that the leader of the council should write to the secretary of state asking that all English local authorities should have the ability to raise council tax on second homes even to three times the normal rate.

The move followed a request by Julian German, an independent councillor and former leader of Cornwall council, who wants to bring England in line with Wales. The Welsh government introduced a law this year that allows local authorities to set council tax premiums of up to 300 per cent on second homes and long-empty properties.

German told The Times: "If the Westminster government wants to devolve the ability for councils to raise council tax on second homes then why put a cap on it at 100 per cent, why not trust local government to decide what is right for them, be that 150 per cent or 400 per cent?"

The proposals are subject to the government's Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill receiving royal assent. The bill gives local authorities powers to double council tax on second homes and is expected to be made law in time to apply from April 2024.

North Yorkshire county council, which has the highest concentration of second homes in England, became the first English council last month to pass a measure committing itself to doubling council tax bills on second homes.

At present Cornwall can double council tax only on homes that have been empty for two years or more.

It charges a 200 per cent premium on homes left empty for more than five years and 300 per cent for those empty for more than ten years.

A report to the committee estimated that doubling the rates of council tax on all second homes could generate an extra £27 million in revenue for the authority. According to the report, there are more than 13,000 properties in Cornwall classed as second homes on the council tax system — one of the highest levels in the country.

"Second home ownership within Cornwall is significant and is recognised to have a negative impact in terms of the supply of homes available to meet local housing need," the report said.

It said data shows 722 properties are being charged a 100 per cent premium for being empty for more than two years, generating £854,000.

Second homes and holiday lets are blamed for an affordability crisis in Cornwall after falling stocks of housing to let led to a sharp rise in rents.

Locals have been upset over recent years by prominent second home owners, including the celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay who came down from London to spend much of lockdown at his second home on the coast.

St Petroc's, a homelessness charity, said last week that "thousands" of local people were at "breaking point". The council's cabinet must vote on the proposal before a formal resolution goes to a vote of the full council.

The people of Salcombe, the Devon seaside town known as "Chelsea-on-Sea" for its wealthy visitors, became so worried about second home owners buying prime properties that they have enacted the strictest code against out of towners in the country.

South Hams district council has made it a legal requirement that all new-build homes must be sold with a Section 106 agreement stating they will be a principal residence in perpetuity.

Several other seaside towns, including St Ives have introduced rules for new properties to be sold as principal residences but none has dictated that all should remain a principal residence.

The 'eco dog' who fetches plastic bottles for recycling

Benjamin Barraclough

It is estimated that British households are failing to recycle around 16 million plastic bottles a day. But at least one border collie is doing his bit.

Thirteen-year-old Scruff from Nuneaton in Warwickshire has been dubbed the "eco dog" by locals after collecting hundreds of plastic bottles for his owners to recycle.

Anyone with a dog needs to have some little bags handy when taking their pet for a walk, but David Grant and Yvonne Faulkner-Grant have to bring some slightly sturdier material to collect whatever Scruff finds.

After noticing his habit of picking up plastic bottles — then dropping them again — his owners feared people would think they were littering. "We got him to start bringing the bottles to us and we put them in a bag and then count them up at the end of the walk," Faulkner-Grant said.

"Now, he will see one on the other side of the road and look at me as if to say, 'Can I get it?' I'd say he will have collected at least 1,000 this year."

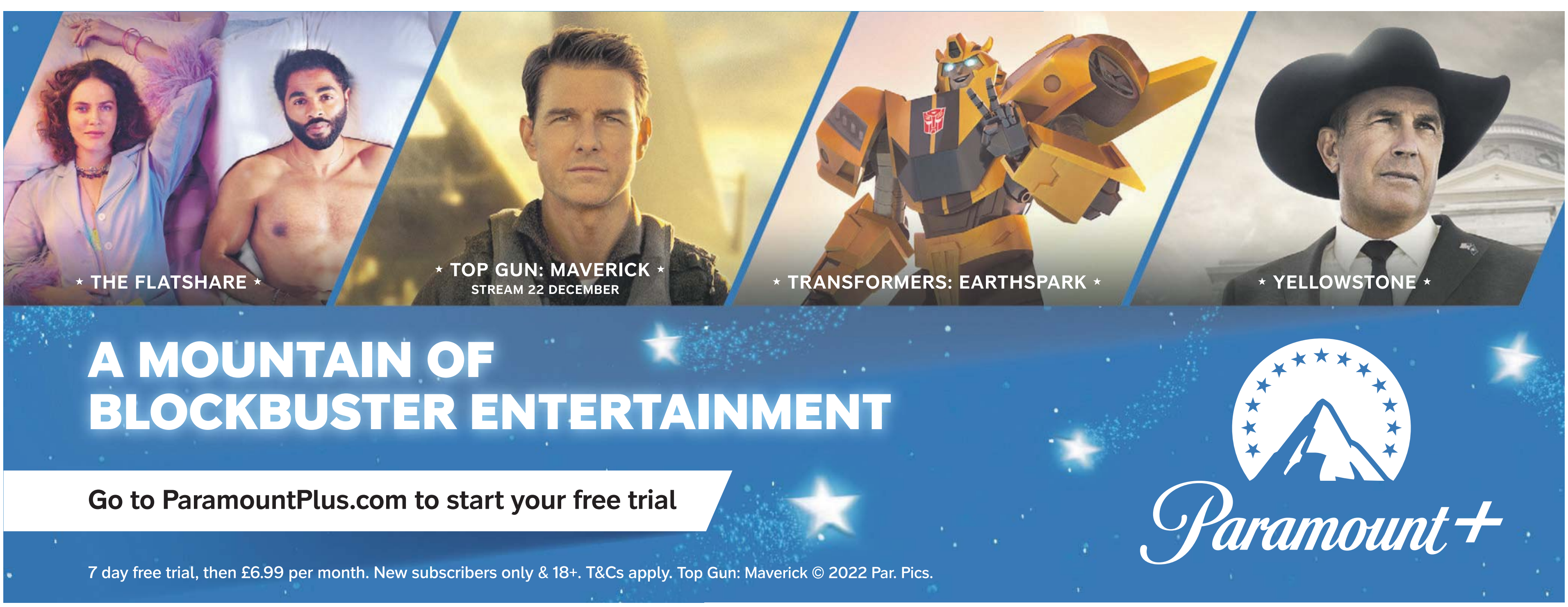
Grant says Scruff should be "working for the council" given his proficiency, with up to 15 bottles collected per trip.

Caroline Round, a neighbour and family friend who also walks Scruff, says he "will not go past a bottle without picking it up", adding: "He's so intelligent. He will always stop on his walk and won't move on until he's picked it up. If you're in a field with him, he will be off the lead and away."

As well as the satisfaction of making the world a greener place, Scruff also gets a treat for a job well done.



Scruff the border collie with his litter





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Tory MP loses whip after complaint

George Sandeman

The MP Julian Knight has had the Conservative whip removed after a complaint against him was made to the Metropolitan Police.

Knight, 50, is chairman of the Commons digital, culture, media and sport committee and has represented Solihull in the West Midlands since 2015.

The whip was removed from him late last night by Simon Hart, the chief whip, which means Knight will no longer sit on the Tory benches in the Commons.

A spokeswoman for the chief whip said yesterday: "Following a complaint made to the Metropolitan Police this evening, we have removed the whip from Julian Knight MP with immediate effect." She refused to discuss the nature of the complaint, while the Met said that, in line with policy, it would not be commenting on the matter without specific allegations.

Knight now joins just over a dozen other MPs who sit in the Commons as independents. Several of these are Conservatives who have had the whip suspended for disciplinary reasons, among them Matt Hancock, who said he would not stand again for his seat in West Suffolk at the next general election after appearing on *I'm A Celebrity*.

Christopher Pincher and Rob Roberts had the Tory whip removed for allegations of sexual misconduct.

In the past week, Conor Burns has had the whip restored after he was cleared of sexual misconduct following an incident at the Conservative Party conference in October.

The Bournemouth West MP, who was sacked as a trade minister following the allegation, said: "I knew I would come out the other side of this, and my name would be clear, because there was nothing to what had happened."

In a statement, a Conservative spokesman said: "The party received a complaint and investigated in line with its code of conduct. After undertaking appropriate inquiries and reviewing all the evidence available to establish the facts, the party concluded there was no basis on which to investigate further.

"The matter is now closed and Mr Burns's membership will be reinstated at the nearest possible opportunity."



The whip was removed from Julian Knight with "immediate effect"

Last month, in his role as chairman of the DCMS committee, Knight accused English rugby's chiefs of "sleepwalking" into a crisis and said the RFU chief executive Bill Sweeney and Premiership Rugby's chief executive, Simon Massie-Taylor, should consider their positions after "failures on an epic scale".

The rebuke followed the collapse of the rugby clubs Wasps and Worcester Warriors, which have both dropped out of English rugby's top flight after going into administration.

Massie-Taylor accepted that the financial position of most Premiership clubs was "sub-optimal", with most running at a loss, but that was "not uncommon in sport".

Knight also questioned why the co-owner of Worcester, Colin Goldring, had not been banned by the RFU or Premiership authorities after the Solicitors Regulation Authority ruled in July that he should not be allowed to work in the legal profession.

Knight said he would write to the Serious Fraud Office about the issue, adding: "It seems to me he made a financial gain from having told a lie."

Pirate TV crew to pay Golden Hinde owner damages

Makers of a Netflix pirate epic must pay damages to the owner of a reconstruction of Sir Francis Drake's galleon after they abandoned filming plans because of safety concerns (Jonathan Ames writes).

Roddy Coleman, who owns the Golden Hinde on the south bank of the Thames in London, accused the filmmakers of "shabby behaviour" in backing out of an agreement to shoot part of a TV series on board.

The Golden Hinde, a full-size reconstruction of Drake's 16th-century galleon, was built in 1973 in Devon, using traditional methods. Coleman bought it in 1984 and once retraced Drake's round-the-world voyage in it.

The legal dispute centred on *The Lost Pirate Kingdom*, a Netflix series by the production company World Media Rights. Shooting started in 2019 and the first episode was screened last year.

The docu-drama was narrated by Derek Jacobi and starred James Oliver Wheatley as the pirate Blackbeard and Mia Tomlinson as the pirate princess Anne Bonny. The series tells the story of the creation of an early-18th century "pirate republic" in the Bahamas, and includes scenes of swordplay involving actors leaping from masts and rigging.

Coleman, 77, told Central London county court that the filmmakers had used his ship for earlier scenes and asked him in 2020 about shooting retakes.

The owner said that eight staff had spent hours clearing the decks ready for the shoot. He added in court that there had been "a loose mention of health and safety but nothing really specific" from the production company.

However, the filmmakers pulled out of the deal, and the production company's finance director said that "multiple hazards" had been discovered.

Last December, a judge at Clerkenwell county court ruled in favour of Coleman's company, saying that World Media Rights had been "wrong to repudiate this contract". Coleman was awarded £2,400 in compensation.

The filmmakers appealed, telling Judge Richard Roberts they had been "concerned that the location couldn't address" their safety fears.

Coleman told the court that his company had told World Media it had "behaved rather shabbily".

Judge Roberts refused permission for an appeal to go ahead and backed the original damages award.







ALAMY/NETFLIX

Roddy Coleman, below left, owns the Golden Hinde where scenes in the series The Lost Pirate Kingdom were filmed

Mortuary sex abuser gets 4 more years

David Woode Crime Correspondent

A double murderer who abused the bodies of more than 100 dead women and girls in hospital mortuaries was called "scum" yesterday as he was sentenced for further offences.

David Fuller, 68, is serving a whole-life sentence for the sexually motivated murders of Wendy Knell, 25, and Caroline Pierce, 20, in two attacks in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, in 1987. At his trial last year he admitted 44 charges of sexually abusing 78 dead women between 2008 and November 2020.

Last month the former hospital electrician admitted abusing the bodies of 23 women aged between 45 and 92, ten of whom have never been identified.

Fuller "violated" the women's bodies while "many were still wearing medical equipment from the treatment they had received from doctors trying to save their lives", a court was told.

Fuller was sentenced at the Old Bailey to four years. Mrs Justice Cheema-Grubb told Fuller she had seen "no evidence of genuine remorse".

She said: "The depravity of what you did, to those you killed and those you defiled after death, reveals that your conscience is seared. It is almost impossible to believe that a single man can cause the misery, to so many, that you have done. But you did it and in consequence you are paying the price that human justice can exact, the rest of your mortal life in prison."

The daughter of a ward sister who was abused after her death told the court of her "absolute disgust" at Fuller's actions. "He took advantage of her helplessness in death where we were unable to protect her," she said.

The brother of another victim said: "David Fuller has tainted every single memory I have of my sister. All I can think of is what he did to my sister when she was supposed to be resting." A man shouted "scum" from the public gallery.

Detective Superintendent Ivan Beasley of Kent police, who led the investigation, said: "Our priority from day one has been ensuring justice for every single victim violated by Fuller's systematic and unimaginably depraved offending. Sentencing will mean little to this abhorrent individual, who … has demonstrated no remorse."

Fuller was caught in 2020 after a DNA breakthrough linked him to the cases, known as the Bedsit Murders. At his three-bedroom, semi-detached home in Heathfield, East Sussex, police found Fuller's computer hard drive, which had 818,051 images and 504 videos of his abuse of female corpses.

The offences took place at the Kent and Sussex Hospital, which has since closed, and the Tunbridge Wells Hospital, in Pembury, where he had worked in maintenance since 1989. The government has announced an independent inquiry into how Fuller went undetected until his arrest.

More than 90 family members whose loved ones were victims of Fuller will receive compensation of up to £25,000.

Blame your thirsty genes for that final glass of wine

Peter Chappell

If you wake up feeling worse for wear after a Christmas party this week, you may not be fully to blame.

The amount of wine someone drinks in a week is influenced by their genetic make-up, a study has suggested, and having certain genes could be adding three drinks to a weekly intake.

Researchers looked at genetic data for almost 3.4 million people who were asked how many alcoholic drinks they consumed in an average week.

The 10 per cent with the highest genetic score linked to drinking put away more than seven drinks a week. The 10 per cent with the lowest genetic score drank less than four.

Professor Dajiang Liu, a co-author of the study, from Penn State College of Medicine in the US, said: "These findings could help to explain why there are some people who are always available to go to a bar for a drink, or willing to open a bottle of wine. However, we can't entirely blame our genes, as behaviour is very important … and it is always possible for people to decide to cut down on alcohol and lead a healthier life."

Scientists located thousands of genes seen in those who were above-average drinkers, the Daily Mail reported.

The study, published in Nature, found that people with a higher genetic likelihood of smoking also drank more.

Liu said: "We've now found more than 1,900 extra genes that are linked to alcohol and tobacco use and had not previously been identified.

"A large majority of these genetic variations are shared by people from different ethnic groups, but how people choose to live is still more important than what is in their DNA."

CONFLICT APPEAL

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HELP US DELIVER MEDICAL CARE BEYOND THE FRONTLINES



An MSF medic treats a patient onboard the medical train. Photograph © Andrii Ovod/MSF



23 October 2022

CHRISTOPHER STOKES IS COORDINATING MSF'S MEDICAL WORK IN UKRAINE

"On 10 October I had just left the train station in Dnipro, eastern Ukraine, when the car suddenly started shaking. A second later, we heard the blast from the first missile. By the time we reached the office, we'd felt four more shockwaves from strikes. Since then, there have been regular waves of bomb attacks targeting infrastructure and civilian areas. Yesterday there were more hits close to where we were working.

We're now gearing up for the very real possibility that the electricity will go off across the whole of Ukraine as a result of these ongoing attacks. That will have drastic knock-on effects on hospitals, healthcare and people's lives. People are heading into winter with the risk there will be no electricity, heating or hot water.

We're doing our best to prepare. We're helping a number of hospitals near the frontline get ready. We're running mobile clinics in areas previously under Russian occupation where people have had no access to the medicines they need for months. MSF operates a specially designed medical train that evacuates patients from near the frontlines of the fighting to safer areas and we're looking at ways to keep that running, even if the electricity fails. It's been kitted out by MSF and Ukrainian Railways with an intensive care unit and inpatient carriages. To date, we've evacuated 1,851 patients in 60 trips, most of them suffering from blast injuries and shrapnel wounds.

Last weekend we carried one family on the train who needed to be evacuated from the war zone. They had returned to their home in Nikopol on 5 October after having fled the war months earlier. On 6 October, just one day after returning, their house was hit by a shell. The father suffered minor injuries, but one of his daughters was badly injured and ultimately had to have both legs amputated. She was only six years old.

The Ukrainians are doing the vast bulk of the medical work in this war. Our role is about filling the gaps, whether that's supplying ambulances, running the medical train or providing medicines to people cut off from healthcare. With these latest attacks, people's medical needs are growing, and it's vital we are here."

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Plea for girls and boys to learn that fertility won't last

Rosie Taylor, Kat Lay Health Editor

Teenage girls and boys should be taught they will not be fertile forever, the women's health ambassador says.

Professor Dame Lesley Regan said they should watch videos explaining that "ovaries get worn out" so they can "take charge of their fertility".

Regan is a former president of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and a professor at Imperial College London.

Research shows women are at their most fertile in their twenties but, on average, fertility begins to decline after the age of 30 and drops off sharply after 35. Men's fertility also declines, particularly after the age of 45.

In 2020 the average age at which a woman had her first child in the UK was at a record high of 30.7 years, up from 26.4 in the mid-1970s.

Regan told the annual conference of the fertility charity Progress Educational Trust, that society needed to "do a lot more" to help to prepare teenagers for adulthood, including spreading educational messages about fertility in magazines and on social media.

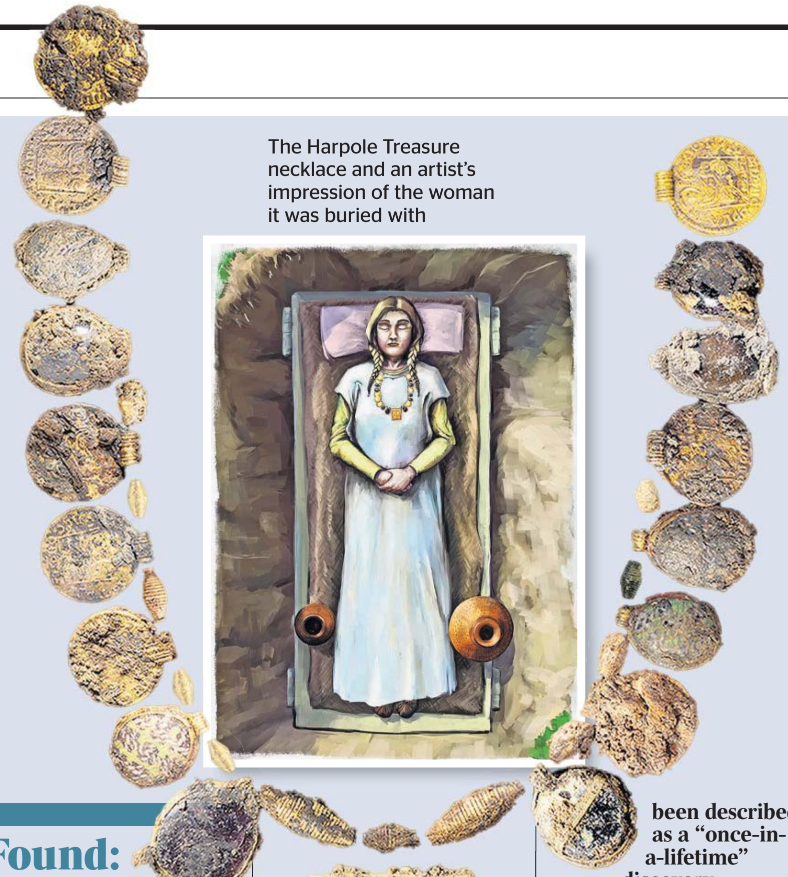
"We need TikTok videos, don't we, and all of those sorts of things: 'Remember that your ovaries get worn out or they get tired or they get too old'. We've got to impress on them [young people] the importance of all of those things and of taking charge of their fertility, either to explore it or to curtail it.

"So I think the education side of it is absolutely crucial. And I don't think it should just be schools, I think it should be all of us in society making sure that we give adolescents the tools that they need to make the best decisions for themselves later in life and I include the boys in that as well as the girls."

Dr Gitau Mburu, of the World Health Organisation, said: "We do need to try to engage them [young people]. It doesn't have to be bombarding them with, 'Plan your fertility now', that's not what we are saying. But they need to have some age-appropriate information, using the right language, to pass on that information as we need to break the barriers."

Julia Chain, chairwoman of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, said that long NHS waiting lists were affecting couples' chances of having a baby because many were being forced to delay starting fertility treatment.

She said that the NHS should prioritise giving care that women needed before accessing fertility treatment, such as removal of fibroids.



The Harpole Treasure necklace and an artist's impression of the woman it was buried with

Found: the golden burial bling to die for

Almost 1,400 years on, the necklace's colours may have faded but archaeologists still saw flickers of gold (Jack Blackburn writes).



The medieval piece — the most ornate of its kind to be found so far — has been described as a "once-in-a-lifetime" discovery.

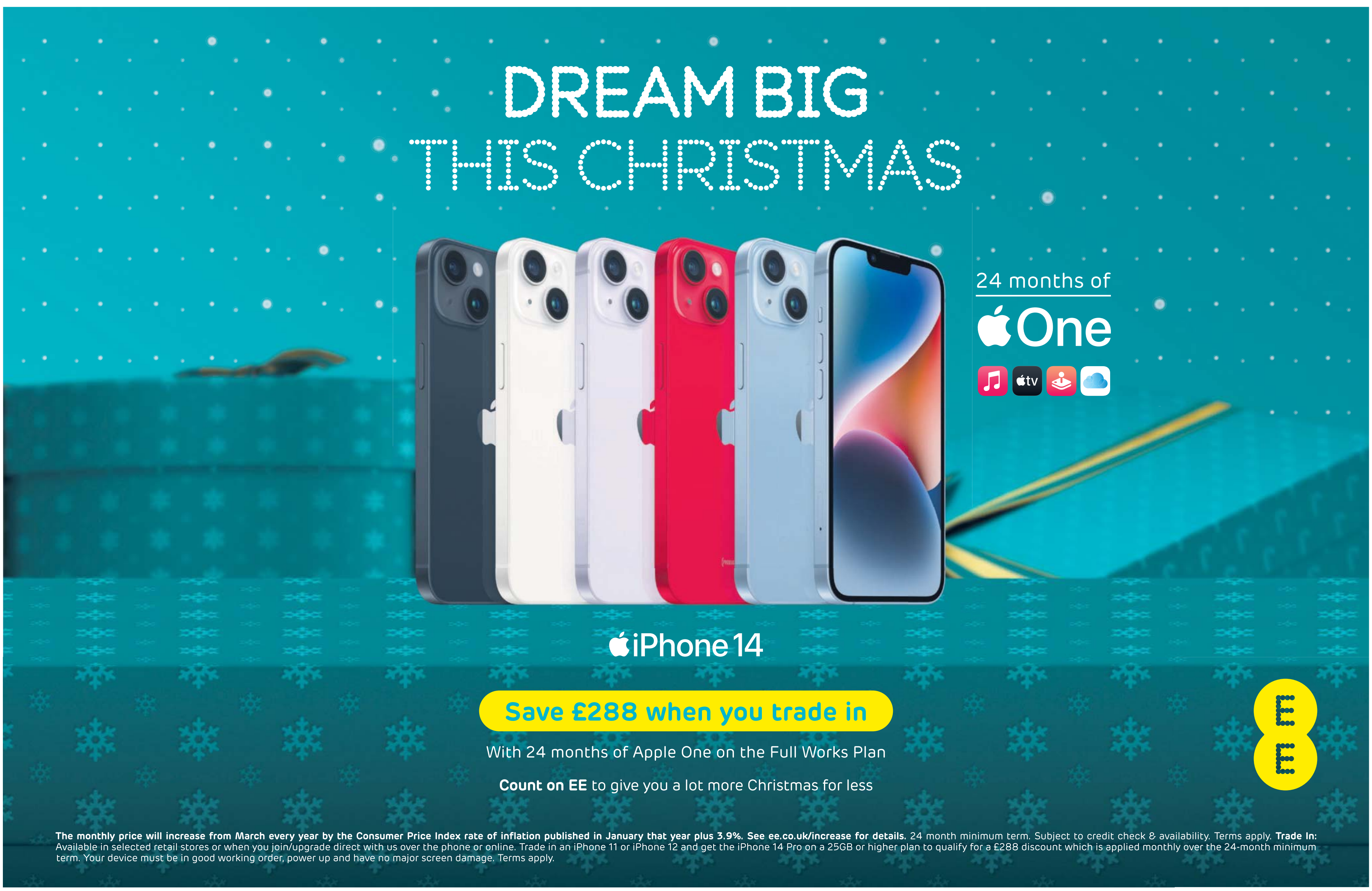
Uncovered during a dig near Harpole in Northamptonshire on land that was being prepared for a housing development, it contains at least 30 pendants and beads made from gold, glass, garnets, semi-precious stones and Roman coins. Dating from as early as AD630, it was found in the grave of an apparently high-status woman.

"Lots of necklaces with similar pendants have been found in female burials dating to around this time," said Katherine Newton of Museum of London Archaeology. "However, only the Harpole Treasure necklace has this incredible variety."

Other than some tooth enamel, nothing remains of the person who was buried with the necklace. The jewellery has Christian motifs, most notably on the centrepiece, and the burial plot also had a large, ornately decorated cross, suggesting the woman was an early Christian leader: royal, an abbess, or both.

"This find is truly a once-in-a-lifetime discovery — the sort of thing you read about in textbooks and not something you expect to see coming out of the ground in front of you," said Simon Mortimer, the planning firm RPS's archaeology consultant.

The Harpole Treasure will be shown in more detail on the BBC's *Digging for Britain* next month following its discovery in April.



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Prehistoric clues are sedimentary for the Sherlocks of DNA science

Tom Whipple Science Editor

BETH ZAIKEN





Scientists discovered that a barren part of Greenland once thrived with animals such as elephants

Where today you find lichens and mosses, two million years ago the mighty mastodon elephant roamed. Where today there is dead polar desert, we now know once there were trees, hares and horseshoe crabs.

But the most exciting finding from the latest research into a desolate patch of northern Greenland is that we know all this not because of fossils, but because of sediment containing the oldest DNA ever sampled.

Scientists said that the success of the approach points to a new way to understand individual prehistoric creatures and entire prehistoric ecosystems.

They have been trying for 16 years to sample environmental DNA from the region, known as the Kap København Formation. "It is similar to the Sahara, just under polar conditions," Professor Eske Willerslev, of the University of Cambridge, said. "There's almost nothing there of life of any significance."

Unlike extracting DNA from a fossil, their approach meant that they could gain an understanding of the full range of creatures in an ecosystem that they estimate was 10C-20C warmer.

But it also meant finding and amplifying snippets of genetic code.

Their analysis of the DNA, almost twice as old as any sequenced before, shows that this land was unlike any seen today. An odd mix of the temperate and the polar, it came complete with a very unexpected mastodon, far north of its North American heartlands. Willerslev said that these creatures would have seen a far more pleasant vista than the one his colleagues have shivered in during the many years they have worked there.

Willerslev said: "There's this river mouth bringing with it sediments and deposits from land." Also deposited were the bits of DNA from the animals and plants around the river, the research published in the journal Nature, said. The DNA bonded to the minerals and was preserved in cold sediment. Scientists think that the cold temperature and the minerals preserved the DNA and enabled them to read it.

Willerslev said that the mastodon left him "mind-blown" because nobody "had ever speculated that a mastodon should be in Greenland".

But he said that the scientific significance was in seeing a complete, and very different, ecosystem.

Dinosaurs on the up until asteroid hit

Rhys Blakely Science Correspondent

A review of fossil records has shed new light on the final years of the dinosaurs, showing that they were thriving right up to the moment an asteroid strike doomed them to extinction.

The question of how well the dinosaurs were faring just before they vanished some 66 million years ago after an asteroid triggered a "nuclear winter" has been disputed for decades.

Dinosaurs, some researchers have argued, had already slumped into a period of long-term decline.

The new study, the most comprehensive yet, reaches a different conclusion: that they were cut down in their prime.

An international team of palaeontologists and ecologists analysed 1,600 fossil records from North America to build a picture of how food chains and animals were evolving. Immediately prior to the asteroid strike, dinosaurs dominated every land ecosystem.

Dinosaurs had become well adapted to their habitats and this sowed the seeds of their destruction: they could not cope with an asteroid collision that shrouded the Earth in dust. But another group of animals — the mammals — would prove more flexible in their eating habits and behaviours. They were "pre-adapted" to the disaster, Professor Steve Brusatte of the University of Edinburgh, who led the study, suggested.

The findings are published in the journal Science Advances.



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Indoor pollution a bigger health risk in modern homes

Adam Vaughan Environment Editor

Tackling indoor pollution should be made a priority because of the significant harm it does to people's health, according to a report by England's chief medical officer.

Reducing dirty air within homes and public buildings posed a challenge, however, because climate change goals were leading to increasingly airtight buildings, Professor Chris Whitty said.

The worst source of indoor pollution in most homes was cooking, particularly from gas hobs where an extractor fan was not used, said Professor Frank Kelly of Imperial College London. "Cooking is a major problem in a lot of households," he said.

Other big sources of indoor pollutants included candle-burning and the use of incense, cleaning products, air fresheners and deodorant sprays, Kelly said. The lemon smell in many cleaning products is created by limonene, a volatile organic compound that can be harmful to breathe.

Whitty said: "Eighty per cent or more of someone's average day is spent indoors. So if there is indoor air pollution it is important because people are exposed to it for a long period."

Improvements in outdoor air quality as drivers increasingly switched to electric cars meant that indoor pollution had become "much more important" in relative terms, Whitty said.

Up to 38,000 people die prematurely in England each year because of outdoor air pollution. The equivalent figure for indoor pollution is not known because research is at an early stage, but wood burning indoors has been linked to asthma and lung infections in children, and exposure to high concentrations of volatile organic compounds, often found in cleaning products, paints and solvents, is associated with a heightened risk of cancer and of liver and kidney damage.

"A lot of these modern products, unfortunately, bring pollution into our home," Kelly said. "Whereas the previous generation just put some vinegar in the water and used that as a very effective cleaning agent."

Whitty's report, published today, demonstrates what he described as the "massive difference" between various sources of home heating. Open fires cause 2,950g of carbon dioxide emissions per megawatt hour, falling to 335g for "ecodesign" wood-burning stoves, 0.72g for gas-fired boilers and zero for electric systems such as a heat pump.

Whitty said that ventilation was the most important way to mitigate the effects of indoor pollution. He added, though, that this could be at odds with efforts to keep homes warm and emissions down by making them well insulated. "The key thing is not to pretend there isn't conflict," he said. "There is a conflict; it is a resolvable conflict."

Kelly said that technological solutions would be required, such as the use of air purifiers. "But of course it's expensive, and not all homes will be able to afford that," he said. As an alternative, the type of mechanical air exchange found in offices could be installed in new-build homes.

Electric cars remained a key technology for reducing outdoor air pollution, the report said, despite criticism that their heavier weight increased the production of tiny particulate matter from roads, tyres and brakes, worsening its effects. It said that such "non-exhaust emissions" would increase from accounting for 7.4 per cent of total emissions of PM2.5 pollution in 2016 to 9.5 per cent by 2030 if no action was taken. Nonetheless, PM2.5 pollution would fall overall, because electric cars produce no exhaust emissions.

"We are pro-EV [electric vehicle]," Whitty said.

The report said that historical declines in PM2.5 emissions had stalled in the past decade and that this "needed attention". The government missed a deadline at the end of October for issuing new PM2.5 targets under the Environment Act but Thérèse Coffey, the environment secretary, has indicated that she is hoping to publish them before Christmas.

Call to tackle sewage and floods with 12-year-old law

Adam Vaughan

Experts have urged ministers to use a 12-year-old law to ensure that homebuilders in England provide more green spaces to curb the risk of flooding and sewage pollution.

Successive ministers have resisted the move, fearing it would hinder meeting targets for homes and end a builder's right to connect to existing sewers.

Forty planning, engineering and environment groups have written to the prime minister, urging him to implement schedule three of the 2010 Flood and Water Management Act.

This would mean companies building and maintaining "sustainable drainage systems" (SuDs), such as ponds, planters and permeable paving, so drains were not swamped during heavy rain. "Implementation is essential to address growing surface water flood risk [and] tackling the sewage pollution problem," the signatories, including the Royal Town Planning Institute, the Town and Country Planning Association and Water UK, the trade body, said. The government has been reviewing the issue, and a decision was initially due in October.

The Times understands the advisory group on the review is in favour of implementing schedule three.

"Backward thinking and policies mean 1.5 million homes have been built in a way that doesn't manage water well. Climate change-driven extreme weather advances and sewers are full to overflowing," Terry Fuller, chief executive of The Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management, which organised the letter, said.

The groups behind the letter say that while some developers perceive SuDs as "difficult and expensive", that was not true and they could even be cheaper than conventional drainage.

The National Federation of Builders said: "There is a likelihood that schedule three becomes the 12th tax on industry in the last two years."

The government did not respond to a request for comment.

Accountants 'blow £100,000' in parking row

Jonathan Ames Legal Editor

It's the sort of expenditure that would give most bean-counters pause for thought, but two accountants have supposedly spent £100,000 on a four-year legal battle over parking bays.

Ivan Soares, 53, and his neighbour Manish Kothari, 41, are locked in a feud over their west London cul-de-sac, with another trial to come.

Kothari, his brother and his sister-in-law accuse Soares and his wife, Sunita, of deliberately leaving vehicles inches away from theirs.

Manish, Sandip and Bindu Kothari claim the Soareses' parking habits make it difficult for them to open their car door. However, the Soareses accuse the Kotharis of trespassing — and tensions have mounted to the point where the police have been involved.

The row has already been before a judge once, with legal costs hitting six figures. Another three-day trial is to follow, despite Judge Simon Monty urging the neighbours to settle their differences without wasting any more money.

The dispute centres on three parking spaces outside the neighbours' houses in Harefield. Two are owned by the Soareses and a third — between them — is owned by the Kotharis.

Historically the families agreed to swap spaces. Under this deal, the Soareses used the two adjacent spaces on the left, closest to their house, with the Kotharis using the one on the right.

The Soareses scrapped the arrangement in 2018, following a row over claims of inconsiderate parking. They are now seeking compensation for trespass, alleging that the Kotharis continued to park in the disputed space for nearly two years after the swap deal ended. In response, the Kotharis have asked for an injunction preventing the Soareses from blocking the shared driveway or deliberately making it difficult for them to park.

In documents filed at the Central London county court, the Kotharis complain that the Soareses have made it impossible for them to use their middle parking space.

"The claimants have caused deliberate nuisance to the defendants by parking a few inches away from the defendant's vehicle, making it extremely difficult to enter [and] exit," they told the judge, adding: "The nuisance had got so intolerable the defendants ceased to park in their one and only parking bay."

Maxwell Myers, the Soareses' barrister, said the couple sought damages of thousands of pounds for the Kotharis' use of their space between 2018 and 2020, as well as a permanent injunction barring them from doing so again.

They are also seeking the court's guidance about how the parking spaces can be clearly delineated to prevent disputes. Myers described the present arrangements as untenable.

Manish Kothari, who presented his case in court, claimed that his family were themselves the victims of blocked access and "trespassing on to our official parking space". He added that they had "tried to engage, we have been very civil, but we can't even access our car". In response, Myers denied that the Soareses had ever trespassed and said there was therefore no need for an injunction.

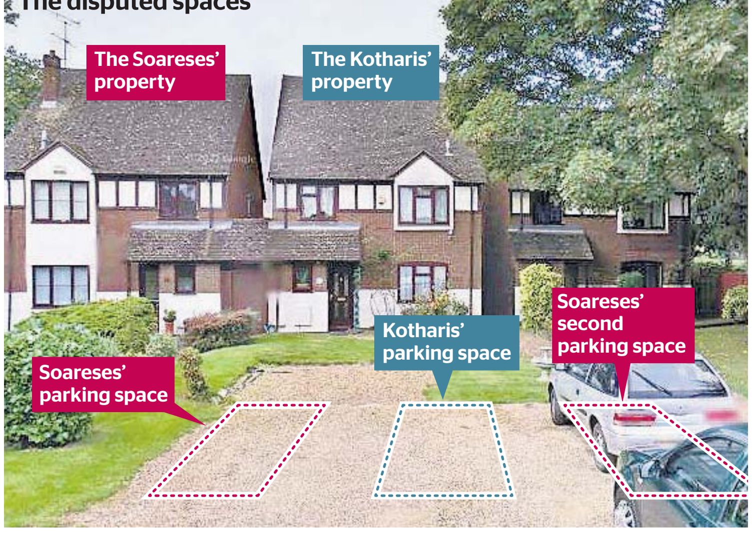
Judge Monty noted that at one point the police were involved in the spat, adding: "Feelings are obviously running very high." He said that "if the parties want to spend £50,000 arguing about a few feet of parking, they can do so … but it seems to me they are arguing about very little at a great risk to themselves in terms of costs". The judge was then told by Myers that the costs so far were "double" the figure that he had suggested.

The trial has been adjourned until next year.



Ivan Soares and Manish Kothari of west London accuse each other of trespass

The disputed spaces



Victims of postmaster IT scandal financially ruined

Mario Ledwith

Postmasters wrongly accused of theft, false accounting and fraud caused by the Post Office's Horizon IT programme cannot afford to heat their homes because of delays paying them compensation. Some claims have been undervalued by £100,000.

Lawyers for the victims said that the failure to compensate them was as bad as the treatment "meted out to them" at the height of the scandal.

In submissions to a public inquiry before a hearing today, law firms said that many of their clients were financially ruined and had no running water or had to work 100 hours a week to feed their children.

The government has set aside about £1 billion to compensate those affected by supposed shortfalls in their accounts that were caused by faulty Fujitsu software, called Horizon.

The Post Office pursued 844 prosecutions against those running branches between 2000 and 2015, and secured 705 convictions. Many were sent to jail, some took their own lives and others had to sell their homes to repay money they had never stolen.

The government has announced details of a compensation scheme for the 555 postmasters who won a High Court legal battle with the Post Office in 2019.

Lawyers criticised the decision to offer victims only £900 each in legal fees to prepare a claim, far less than the amount spent on lawyers by the Post Office. Yesterday Grant Shapps, the business secretary, said the scandal was "nothing short of a travesty".

Julie Beisner, who ran a branch in North Kilworth, Leicestershire, between 1996 and 2021, was offered £502 while legally unrepresented after making a claim through the historical shortfalls scheme administered by the Post Office. Lawyers later valued her claim at almost £177,000. Howe & Co, a law firm, said that showed that the Post Office could not "be trusted to deal fairly" with the claims of sub-postmasters who did not have legal representation.



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Turner prize rewards experience over youth



A member of the Turner prize jury hailed the triumph of experience over youth after a 66-year-old artist won the award (David Sanderson writes)

Veronica Ryan took the £25,000 first prize for sculptures created from found objects such as seeds and nutshells, as well as fabric and plaster. The shortlisted artists Heather Phillipson, Ingrid Pollard and Sin Wai Kin receive £10,000.

Alex Farquharson, 53, the Tate Britain director and Turner prize jury co-chairman, said the panel was impressed by the recent "turn" in Ryan's work. "It is really interesting when an artist late in their career makes breakthroughs," he said. The Turner prize, established in 1984, had an age limit of 50 from 1991 to 2016.



Veronica Ryan, 66, lives in Bristol and New York. Her sculptures combine found objects such as nutshells with fabric and plaster

Ryan, who was born in Montserrat but lives in Bristol and New York, thanked the people who had "looked out for me when I was collecting rubbish … some of that rubbish is some of the most important work".

The artist has previously spoken of the "bizarre stuff that coloured" her experience of Montserrat, including the discovery her father had a parallel family with a half-sibling, also called Veronica.

Less food for thought, more overcooked cliché

Theatre Clive Davis

Kerry Jackson
Dorfman, National Theatre
★☆☆☆☆

It ought to have been refreshing to see Fay Ripley – one of the mainstays of *Cold Feet* – return to the stage after a long absence. What a shame she has chosen such a breathtakingly clumsy piece. April De Angelis's "comedy" about a working-class go-getter who opens a tapas restaurant in an achingly gentrified corner of north London delivers one overcooked cliché after another.

Ripley gives a performance that's painfully lacking in subtlety. Everything in Indhu Rubasingham's production, in fact, is over-emphatic, and I'm not sure any actress could have done much with Kerry's character; she's noisy, pushy and brassy and possesses all the depth of Marlene, Boycie's other half in *Only Fools and Horses*. Much of De Angelis's script does read like a sitcom, albeit one that any producer with an ear for humour would have dropped in the nearest bin.



Fay Ripley's performance is painfully lacking in subtlety

What's intended as a study of class descends into a contrived series of shouting matches in which the middle classes and the proles take lumps out of each other. Michael Gould grapples nobly with the role of Stephen, the smug, left-wing widower who spars with Kerry at the start and then abruptly falls for her dubious charms. Kitty Hawthorne plays his tiresomely dysfunctional, self-righteous daughter, Alice. Michael Fox makes what he can of Will, the homeless young man whose presence on Kerry's doorstep brings out her most venomous, pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps instincts. Gavin Spokes has the near-impossible task of injecting credibility into Warren, the smarmy ex-policeman who wants to be Kerry's Prince Charming.

On Richard Kent's set, an intrusive revolve rumbles back and forth between the restaurant interior and Stephen's anodyne home. Nicola T Chang's sound design, meanwhile, gives Kerry and Athena the opportunity to perform karaoke vocals to a Whitney Houston backdrop. The musical interludes are eccentric at best, but at least they give us a break from the wretched dialogue.

To January 28, nationaltheatre.org.uk

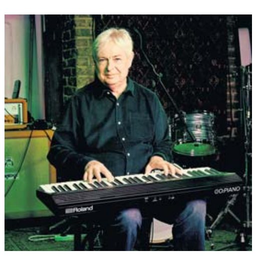
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Food for thought: avoid student politics
Tomiwa Owolade
Page 32

Comment

A right-wing surge? Don't hold your breath

The Tories may appear vulnerable to populism but our Trump moment has passed and voters are moving to the centre

David Aaronovitch



@DAARONOVITCH

The leaders of the populist tribes of Britain have slain a chicken and two hedgehogs, had their favourite academics and pundits examine the entrails and declared the omens to be good. As well they might. After 12 years in power the Conservatives are in deep trouble, far behind in the polls, presiding over high inflation and trains so far from running on time that they don't run at all and, despite all the rhetoric, record net immigration. Meanwhile patrician figures such as Sajid Javid, who just months ago was a credible candidate for leadership, are retreating to sit out the coming defeat while Isabel Oakeshott writes their memoirs. I speak metaphorically. Oh, and Matt Hancock, like a Disney character, is off to discover "a whole new world".

Under these circumstances, where is a low-tax libertarian, a culture warrior or a 2019 red wall Tory voter to turn? There has developed (say the auguries) a giant gap in the political market to the Conservative right, just aching to be filled. Particularly after an election where the Tories could be so badly defeated it would take years for them to recover.

And these days political insurgents enjoy access to the public previously denied them. There's Musk Twitter, YouTube and other social media. From the GB News channel and from other talk-show hosts they enjoy steady sympathetic coverage, in which they and their complaints are treated seriously. Funds aren't necessarily a problem as men (and they do seem all to be men) with money are prepared to fund parties of the right. If these parties could attract high-profile defectors from a member-moulting Tory party, they might be seen as possessing impetus.

Then there is Sir Keir Starmer. By not being Jeremy Corbyn and not being scary (and indeed being criticised for being insufficiently dramatic), the Labour leader might make right-wing voters more relaxed about voting for the angry party they most want, even if it risks letting Labour in. In those circumstances, why not go for it? Finally there is Rishi Sunak, contending with a toxic inheritance (partly inherited of course from himself). Bereft Johnson-lovers (such as the billionaire Lord Cruddas) desperately seeking charisma might also walk.

Nearly a decade ago my former colleague Tim Montgomerie had fun

> Insurgents enjoy previously denied access to the public

on these pages inventing a new alignment for British politics. There would be two parties on the left and centre and two parties on the right and centre. And one of these would be a nationalist, anti-immigration, ultra-patriotic, low-tax force which could even supersede the centrist Tories as the main party of the right.

It was a game but it had a serious point. At the 1922 general election, a split in the Liberals led to Labour becoming one of the country's two main parties. By 1964, the first election I covered journalistically (for Radio Gospel Oak, my primary school's news station) the Liberals were down to four seats. In 1983 it nearly happened again when the Liberal-Social Democratic Alliance came within 2.3 per cent of overtaking Labour in the popular vote, while admittedly winning only a tenth of the seats.

So history suggests it can very occasionally be done. Just. And the times appear suitably out of joint. But what about the political organisations anxious to take on the role? Essentially there are four. The biggest and best funded appears to be Reform UK, formerly the Brexit Party of Nigel Farage (he is party president), led by a property millionaire called Richard Tice. Tice regularly claims Reform's membership is booming, but in the absence of any figures for that membership, past or present, it is impossible to check.

Next there's the Reclaim Party, the vehicle for the actor Laurence Fox, who was radicalised by appearing on BBC *Question Time* where he challenged "white privilege". Fox's subsequent social media posts led to the vastly wealthy Brexit donor Jeremy Hosking giving him £1 million to set up a party.

Third is the rump Ukip. And fourth the peculiar and accidental residue of the old Social Democratic Party, which (like the others) is anti-woke and anti-migrant but unlike them is not low tax or libertarian. For some reason the old Revolutionary Communist Party cadres who joined the Brexit party en masse and now gather round the Spiked publication and are never far away from a TV studio seem to favour the SDP. It may not yet have influence but it has influencers.

Four right-wing parties is three too many. In October, Reform and the SDP announced a "general election pact" in which they pledged to "co-operate in a significant number of

VICKIE FLORES/EPA-EFE/SHUTTERSTOCK



Richard Tice, leader of Reform UK, claims his membership is booming

constituencies", and in South Yorkshire to stand candidates under "joint branding". There's no reason to think Reclaim couldn't be persuaded to take part in such a coalition.

Now, when I snap my fingers, wake up. SNAP. The problem is that this is all just a fantasy. In the first instance there is absolutely nothing in the electoral performance of these outfits to suggest anything other than embarrassment. At the Chester by-election last week, Reform managed 2.7 per cent of the vote, following their 1.7 per cent in Wakefield. Reclaim polled 375 votes at the North Shropshire by-election. The SDP have elected a councillor in Leeds and that's it.

In national polls, to great excitement from some entrail-readers, Reform has occasionally got to 9 per cent. However most pollsters give them 4-6 per cent. And you don't get realignment in a first past the post system on 6 per cent of the vote. Or even 25 per cent. And although these parties all support proportional representation they'll never be in a position to legislate for it.

And there's a lesson from Labour. In 2019 Jeremy Corbyn tested the system to its limits. How far could you go to destroy one of the two great parties? Three years later that

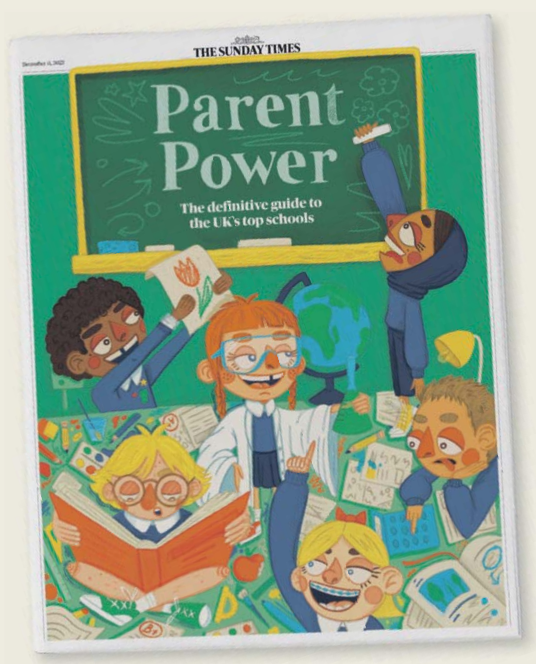
> How far could Corbyn go to destroy one of the two great parties?

same party is 20 points ahead and the hard-nosed Starmerites who stuck with it are vindicated. It is a fair bet that however low the Conservatives are now — as after 1997 — they will be back one day.

The logic of this is fairly ineluctable but is usually met with a version of the "revolt on the right" proposition. Ah yes, this runs, but even at 6-10 per cent the threat to the Tories from defecting culture warriors, nationalists and libertarians will ginger that party to the right. The populists will lose but in losing they will win.

To which I reply, look at the polls. People aren't deserting the Conservatives to the right, but overwhelmingly to the centre. That's where a rejuvenated conservatism will have to base itself. That's who we are. The Trump moment in British politics is over.

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Leading articles

Food for thought: avoid student politics

Oxford fracas shows how the modern-day sin of 'secular blasphemy' is undermining free thinking

Tomiwa Owolade



@TOMOWOLADE

Why discuss capitalism in a dingy room with undergraduates when you could be reading VS Naipaul? Why scramble to attend a meeting in an obscure cellar when you could be savouring the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins? The best thing I ever did at university was to stay clear of student politics.

The best case for getting involved in this or that political group is socialising with like-minded people. But I steered well away, not simply because I did not want it to distract from my cultural enrichment. I did not want any interest I had in politics to come at the expense of an even more important aspect of my character: the ability to think for myself.

Students don't join a political society to think. They go to belong. It is less like a debating club and more like a religious sect. Just look at the experience of Ellie Greaves.

She is vice-president for women at Oxford University's student union. The union is scrapping the role of women's officer and replacing it with a liberation and equalities officer. At first Greaves did not fully accept this change: "We're not where we need to be in terms of women's representation," she said, "and I think there's a risk of moves to tackle sexual violence being left behind." She also made the fatal mistake of mentioning biology in her defence of women's rights: "Provision for endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome are not accommodated in the way I would like to see."

But like a repentant heretic, Greaves soon made an apology: "The comments I made in this article contribute to a bio-essentialist, narrow-minded narrative of what being a woman is, including the prioritisation of women over minorities."

She didn't stop there. "I cannot apologise enough for the damage and hurt I have caused the trans community."

> Politics is coloured by some of the features of fundamentalist religion

Greaves had blasphemed against intersectionality, which has turned from an obscure legal theory conceived by the American scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw into a set of doctrines mandated by puritanical activists across the anglophone world: you must consider all minorities in your campaign for equality, not just women; you must prioritise the most oppressed group in society, and they are not women; trans women are women.

Women are not the only victimised group in society. It is right that anyone, irrespective of their characteristics, should be treated with dignity and free from harm. But campaigning for women's rights means you need to accept biological reality, and there is no getting away from that. The people who should best know this are instead silenced.

In her recent Reith lecture, the Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie argued that we live in a culture of moral stridency. People who commit "secular blasphemy" are sanctioned by "virtual vigilante action whose aim is not just to silence the person who has spoken but to create a vengeful atmosphere which deters others from speaking".

Greaves is not a right-wing culture warrior. She was silenced not because she is right-wing but because she is left-wing. She uses all the right terminology; the people who pressured her to apologise come from her tribe. In the sectarian world of student politics, heretics are condemned more vociferously than infidels. A heretic is someone who accepts the main doctrines but might deviate from them. An infidel never believed in them in the first place.

The colouring of politics by some of the features of fundamentalist religion is not simply true of student activism. It is true of wider society. The findings of the 2021 census, published last week, show that for the first time in recorded history most people in England and Wales do not describe themselves as Christian. But this doesn't mean large numbers of people are becoming less religious in their outlook; their religious energy is merely directed to politics.

Helen Lewis explored the link between politics and religion in her BBC Radio 4 documentary *The Church of Social Justice*. She argues that politics has now replaced the role of religion. We invest politics with the same zeal we previously invested in religion.

I have a friend who comes from a prominent left-wing family, and when she told her father she disagreed with him about the greatness of Jeremy Corbyn he was heartbroken. Left-wing politics is his life. This statement from his daughter was like a child in a Christian family denying the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Politics of this kind can provide consolation. As society becomes more fractured, it can bind people together. But as Lewis puts it in a follow-up piece for The Atlantic: "Treating politics like a religion also makes it more emotionally volatile, more tribal (because differences of opinion become matters of good and evil) and more prone to outbreaks of moralising and piety."

Universities ought to be places where you can exercise your right to think freely, not have all your views chosen for you. They ought to cultivate critical thinking; they should not encourage dogma. Students will be served much better by reading and learning from the greatest works of literature, the most interesting insights from history, the most profound discoveries of science and the rigours of maths.

They should avoid student politics as much as they can: it is inimical to developing a person fit for an open society.

James Marriott is away

Hilary Rose Notebook

Hey vegans, raising the steaks isn't that smart

I never thought I'd be on the same side as Nusr-Et, the obnoxious restaurant owned by Salt Bae, where they coat steaks in gold leaf and sell them to suckers for £1,500. That, however, is where vegan protesters have pushed me. "We are calling for a world where Salt Bae's restaurant is serving delicious plant-based food," said a spokesperson for a protest group, whose supporters had to be evicted by staff.

Being vegan is a lifestyle choice, and opening a vulgar steak restaurant is a business choice. Why should their business cater for your lifestyle if they can make a good living feeding steak to rich idiots? You don't go to Le Gavroche and demand chicken in black bean sauce. If you don't want steak, don't go to a steak restaurant.

I interviewed the men behind the Bosh vegan empire a few years ago, and they were lovely, but everything I cooked from their book convinced me that nutritional yeast has no place in a civilised society.

Yes, we can argue about inequality and obscene restaurant prices and the role of meat production in climate change, and whatever else makes you think that being vegan is the right choice, and makes me yearn for a bacon butty. But the place to do that isn't a steak restaurant in Knightsbridge, whose clientele appears to be drawn entirely from sandy kingdoms far, far away and the poor, harassed waiting staff are trying to earn a living. And no, thank you, I would not like to try your vegan cheese, and it will not persuade me that my love for brie is wrong, but I wish you joy.

Wheel deal

I'd like to be outraged that car dealers take me for an idiot but they may have a point. I was swindled with a smile when I sold my old car, and it's my fault.

How do you argue that a car is worth more than 2p? I have no idea. It has four wheels? There are no holes in the roof? I took the 2p and walked home.

I stood my ground, though, when the gearbox in my brand new car blew up. When I suggested to the man at VW that this shouldn't happen, he pushed back.

"Ah," he said, bravely resisting the urge to pat me on the head. "You might think that, but actually, cars are designed to go wrong in the first year. That's why they have warranties."

I gaped.

"Oh, come on," I said, "do I look like an idiot? On second thoughts, don't answer that."



Cod date

Robert Pattinson and Suki Waterhouse have gone public as a couple at a Dior show in front of the pyramids, and I hope the path of true love runs smooth.

A friend reminds me that her own experience was more traumatic. She once introduced a boyfriend to her friends over dinner and left the restaurant choice to him. He booked a posh fish restaurant, and that was his first mistake.

His second was when the waitress approached and, bless him, he rose to the challenge. "I was thinking of having the har-kay," he said confidently, pronouncing hake like sake, "but I wondered: is the linguine freshly caught?" To her credit, the waitress calmly assessed the situation and decided to spare the poor lad his blushes.

"Yes," she said. "The linguine was landed in Brixham this morning. But if I were you, I'd have the cod."

Fergie time again

Apparently Fergie is invited to spend Christmas at Sandringham with her dubious ex-husband, and they may join the other royals walking to church on Christmas Day.

This is an excellent idea. Those two reminding us of their weird relationship and continued existence at our expense is just what we need as we sit in our chilly homes, eating sprouts because all the turkeys died. If she could wear that preposterous sailor suit she used to wear in the 1980s, so much the better. A million quid says William and Kate go to her mum's.

Janice Turner is away

Thunderer

Buckingham Palace must counter the Sussexes' claims

Jawad Iqbal

Buckingham Palace needs to wake up to the real, existential danger posed to the monarchy by the toxic allegations that are about to be made in the Sussexes' Netflix series *Harry and Meghan*. Officials are said to be "monitoring events closely" but beyond that there is simply silence. The Palace comes across as terrified of upsetting or provoking the couple, even as they effectively declare war on the royal household.

The six-part documentary series, which is released in part today, includes claims that the Palace leaked and planted stories. In one clip, Harry drops a hint about the royal household playing "a dirty game". Most explosive of all are claims, highlighted in a trailer released earlier this week, that the attacks on the duchess were motivated by racism. Allies of the couple make no bones about it, with one claiming, "it's about hatred, it's about race".

The Palace response to these deadly verbal hand grenades? Nothing except a preferred wish to concentrate on the royal family's engagements this week. This is naive. No institution, let alone the royal family in a constitutional monarchy, can afford to stay silent on charges of racism. Especially when they come in the wake of a series of other similar claims.

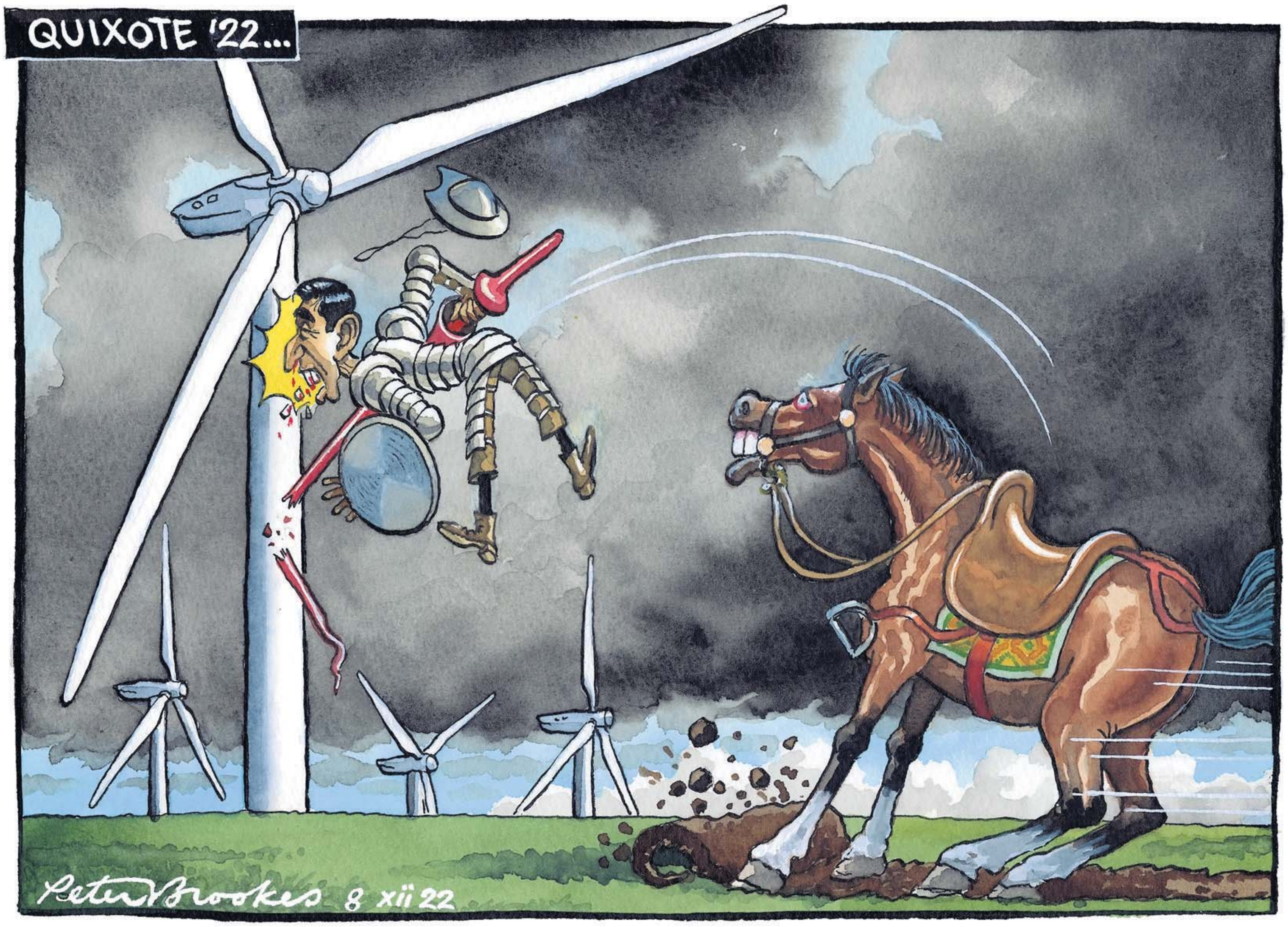
In the duke and duchess's television interview with Oprah Winfrey last year, they implied that an unnamed member of the royal family was racist. In the latest trailer for the new documentary, Harry says: "No one knows the full truth … we know the full truth." Well, not quite. Buckingham Palace knows the truth but somehow won't tell us.

Take, for instance, the allegations that the duchess bullied members of staff (which the Sussexes have always denied). An independent review was conducted by a law firm yet Buckingham Palace kept the results secret, perhaps from a desire not to antagonise the Sussexes further. What folly. The findings should be published immediately.

Meanwhile, household employees who claim to have suffered at the hands of the duchess are prevented from speaking publicly about their experiences by legally binding confidentiality agreements with the Palace. It cannot be right that the Palace is preventing people from speaking out. The non-disclosure agreements should be lifted now.

In a short clip shared online, Harry said: "Ultimately we live in this world now where sharing experiences and sharing stories has an enormous impact." Palace courtiers need to wise up. It is time to tell the other side of the story before the Sussexes bring down the whole royal house of cards.

Jawad Iqbal is a freelance writer



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Sober Sunak earns Tories a dullness dividend

A 'less is more' strategy from Downing Street after the chaos of Truss may yet give the party hope that all is not lost

Iain Martin



@IAINMARTINI

The government's Debt Management Office did something on Wednesday morning that would have been difficult a few months ago amid the chaotic aftermath of the KamiKwasi mini-budget. With little fuss, the DMO "got away" — that is, sold to investors — £700 million of debt in the form of inflation-linked gilts. The auction was oversubscribed 3.24 times, the best such ratio since March 2021. That is to say, this week there were a lot more potential buyers than there was debt to buy.

This might sound like financial gobbledygook. It is very good news, however. When the government on our behalf spends a lot more than it brings in via taxation, the DMO arranges the borrowing. In normal times, run quietly by the banker Sir Robert Stheeman since 2003, the DMO goes about its vital business and hardly gets noticed. It was all different in the late summer and autumn panic, when the Truss government's initiatives made a deteriorating economic situation far worse and triggered a run on Britain. For a while it became frighteningly expensive for the government to borrow on our behalf. As it did to secure a mortgage.

It shows how deep a mess the Tories got themselves into that the reversal of this process and the restoration of some normality counts as a major improvement. It is an important change, nonetheless. The country is in a far better position than it might have been if Liz Truss had clung to power.

Not that Rishi Sunak will get much credit — or not yet — for the rescue job he undertook with Jeremy Hunt, the chancellor. So widespread is the prevailing atmosphere of doom

> An epic Conservative defeat is widely regarded as inevitable

and gloom among Tories that an epic Conservative defeat is widely regarded as inevitable. Fearful MPs are standing down. After the craziest of years, the political question I'm asked most often is simple: is there any possible way they can win the next general election or is it all over?

Until a few weeks ago, I agreed they looked done for. It is not just Labour's whacking great leads in the polls. The reality may be worse than that for the Tories. The electoral coalition of interests assembled between Cameron's majority in 2015 and Johnson's 80-seat majority in 2019 has disintegrated.

The electorate, a pollster keeps telling me, has changed in ways the Tories do not yet fully comprehend. The Tories are disliked by working-class red wall voters who think they have failed on immigration, and by middle-class voters who think they are a disgraceful rabble running down public services. There is no way back from that, surely?

And yet, in just six weeks, by being serious and low key, Sunak has given his party a shot at recovery — or at least a chance to be heard.

On the economy, inflation may have peaked — Covid-hit China not roaring back will reduce competition for resources. There's a chance the recession next year will be milder than feared. If it is indeed shallow, the "hole" in the public finances will turn out smaller than anticipated.

There are those warning that the British economic outlook is about to deteriorate. The billionaire hedge fund manager Chris Rokos, a voice always worth taking seriously, said in a note to investors last month that sterling was vulnerable to another hit. There could be "serious societal implications", he wrote.

As it stands, though, the calming of the markets since the autumn has produced a dullness dividend. Expectations on UK interest rates and mortgage rates have subsided and although Sunak and Hunt have been lucky — always a useful trait — there is no doubt that their attempt to dial down the drama has contributed to the positive effect.

Playing it low key has been a deliberate No 10 policy. Viewers will notice fewer ministers burbling on across the broadcast channels or

> Labour, always capable of blowing it, is being insufficiently ruthless

making announcements. After the last year or so, characterised by relentless rows, resignations galore, serial muppetry and gobsmacking self-indulgence, we, the public want to see and hear as little as possible from our leadership class. Less is more. A No 10 source characterises this as follows: "Making the madness stop."

One consequence has been an attempt to avoid fights, with U-turns so numerous many Sunak critics say the government is going round in circles. Individual cave-ins may be annoying but what does everyone expect? This is what governments do the moment a general election campaign is 18 months away, even more so when the preceding couple of years have been such a legislative mess. If a government can't win a fight because it doesn't have the parliamentary votes, it has to move on. Sunak is taking a reality-based approach.

The Labour Party, always capable of blowing it, is also showing some signs of being insufficiently ruthless, leaving another opening for the prime minister. This week's constitutional paper from Gordon Brown, backed by Sir Keir Starmer, is a case in point. The former PM produced his latest 40-point plan to overhaul the country's governance, perhaps his 30th attempt in the last 25 years at designing a blueprint for a new Britain. Enough.

I'm not overdoing the Conservative case for optimism. There are more Tory scandals to come. Nigel Farage and Reform are attacking on the flank. And the strikes. Goodness, the strikes. There Sunak will have to dig in, after taking the perfectly reasonable position that there are independent pay bodies making rulings, there are not limitless resources when the tax burden is already high, and borrowing — see the Truss experience — has to be handled with care.

Even so, in just six weeks Sunak has given his party a glimmer of a chance.

Letters to the Editor

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Arguments for and against Lords reform

Sir, Daniel Finkelstein makes an elegant case for continuing with an unelected House of Lords ("Axing the Lords is a recipe for bad laws", Dec 7). But his argument, as from most other supporters of the status quo, boils down to asserting that "gridlock" between the chambers would be the inevitable result of having an elected second chamber. It would not be. In the papers on Lords' reform which I published when lord chancellor, there was detail of various second chambers around the world. This suggested that there was no necessary connection between the powers of a second chamber and its method of election or selection. Any legislation for an elected second chamber would have to include clarity about the relative powers of that chamber. We do not need to wait, as Finkelstein insinuates, for a "full written constitution" to spell out those powers. The fundamental restriction on the Lords' powers at present is contained not in convention but in the Parliament Acts.
Jack Straw
Lord chancellor 2007-10

Sir, In 1999 the newly elected Labour government (majority 179) tried to abolish the right to elect for trial by jury in the Criminal Justice (Mode of Trial) Bill. It provoked the first significant rebellion and the government majority in the Commons was cut to 53. The Lords, relying on this rebellion in the lower house, threw out the bill. Legislative ping pong followed, with some insignificant amendments and further large Commons rebellions. Finally the New Labour government gave up and the bill was dropped. Thus the unelected second chamber (including numerous Labour peers) preserved a vital pillar of our civil liberty. Had peers been elected on party political lines and subject to the power of the whips they would not have done so, and the fundamental right to elect for trial by jury would have been lost for ever.

Sir Keir Starmer was not in parliament at the time but he would do well to reflect on this piece of history when he considers Gordon Brown's constitutional proposals.
Bob Marshall-Andrews KC
Labour MP for Medway 1997-2010

Sir, Hugo Rifkind is right: the Lords makes us a global laughing stock ("It takes a Scot to see the Lords is indefensible", Dec 6). In response to Gordon Brown's proposals, Sir Keir Starmer has said that there will be a consultation. A Citizens' Assembly would be the perfect vehicle for such an exercise. The Lords has resisted reform because is easier to say what is wrong with it than to replace it. A Citizens' Assembly could thrash out the structure and remit of a new upper house. In doing so, it would capitalise on the experience of such assemblies debating constitutional questions in countries such as Canada, Denmark and Ireland.
Willy McCourt
Honorary senior research fellow, University of Manchester

Sir, It might be useful to inquire how many of the best brains in the House of Lords would have been prepared to stand, and even campaign, for election before requiring all future candidates to do so. Elections are not necessarily the best way to elicit wisdom and expertise in government.
Anna Webster
Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancs

Sir, Instead of a new set of elected representatives, duplicating the House of Commons, how about a national jury, chosen by lot from the electorate? After all, "sortition" was good enough for the Athenians. It could be a lifetime appointment, on a good salary, with training and back-up: rather like winning the lottery.
Jim Holloway
Manchester

Pillars of science

Sir, I was pleased that Melanie Phillips ate humble pie ("I was wrong: we need more Kate Binghams", comment, Dec 6). As she describes, this country owes our coronavirus vaccination success to Kate Bingham and her vaccination task force. Her achievement was all the greater when we learn of the obstacles she faced. It confirms my belief that everything the government did right during the pandemic was down to three individuals: Patrick Vallance, Chris Whitty and Kate Bingham. Where would be now if such brilliant individuals were in charge of the government's science policy? We surely would be in the EU Horizon and Erasmus programmes, with an agreement on animal and plant health to facilitate export of food products to the EU (letter from Professor Sir Alan Dashwood, Dec 6).
Francis Creed
Emeritus professor of psychological medicine, University of Manchester; Hebden Bridge, W Yorks

School tax rebate

Sir, It is disingenuous for the opposition to imply that the taxpayer is subsiding private schools ("Starmer: I don't want to abolish private schools", Dec 6). Those who send their children to private schools have paid their tax share for state education. This is recognised in Canada, where if you opt for private education most provinces pay the school up to 60 per cent of the allowance for each child in state education. This makes the private sector more affordable, more diverse and less costly to the state. Plans to levy VAT on private schools will do exactly the opposite.
Susan Codrington
London SE11

Eradicating rats

Sir, Melissa Harrison (Nature Notebook, Dec 3) asks if readers have any "tried and tested means by which rat numbers may be reduced without affecting other wildlife". The best method is to use terriers. There are several breeds bred especially for catching vermin, such as the Jack Russell. Not only will no other wildlife suffer but it is the most humane method of killing rats because as soon as they are caught by the back of the neck the terrier gives one quick shake of his head and the rat's neck is broken — instant death.
Pamela Kemp
Chichester

Poor mental health

Sir, The report from the Institute for Public Policy Research makes clear that a government plan to tackle health inequalities cannot be put on the back burner any longer ("Poor mental health affects six out of ten workers on sick leave", Dec 7). Good health, spread evenly across the population, is an economic asset: reducing inequalities will support greater productivity and provide long-term savings to the NHS and wider economy. To do that we need to address the social and environmental factors that lead people to become ill in the first place, such as poor housing, employment status, air pollution and child poverty. To this end the Royal College of Physicians and more than 230 member organisations of the Inequalities in Health Alliance are urging the government to commit itself to a cross-government strategy to reduce health inequalities that considers the role of every department and every policy lever.
Dr Sarah Clarke
President, Royal College of Physicians

Medical gender bias

Sir, Apropos your report "Women wait a decade in pain for arthritis diagnosis" (Dec 6), I am in no doubt that the diagnosis of my axial spondyloarthritis was considerably delayed because of gender bias in medicine. Ten years on from abandoning my job and career because of disabling physical fatigue, and having wearied of taking my symptoms to my dismissive GP, a doctor at the eye clinic treating me for acute uveitis (a common symptom in axial SpA) noticed me limping as a result of back pain and decided to test me for axial spondyloarthritis. She sent me for an x-ray and a blood test. The x-ray was normal and the lab refused to do the blood test. Five years later, when I finally received my diagnosis after an MRI scan (at the age of 52), I learnt that women mostly experience the non-radiographic form of the disease, which is unlikely to show up on an x-ray. I sincerely hope that this misunderstanding of the disease no longer occurs, but fear it probably does.
Jeanette Stafford
Bearsden, Glasgow

Make more ammo

Sir, Colonel John Wilson's point is well made ("Shortage of ammo", letter, Dec 6). Since the end of the Cold War successive governments have run down the logistical tail behind the British Armed Forces. The large depots for ammunition, stores, and spare/retired/reserve vehicles have now mostly gone, sold off and cleared to create new housing estates.

The lesson from the war in Ukraine must be learnt: the industrial capacity to make significant quantities of munitions needs to be recreated, together with the network of secure storage depots. This will have the positive side effect of creating jobs in manufacturing, construction, and project and supply chain management.
James Morgan
Former captain, Intelligence Corps; Kings Ripton, Cambs

Letters to the Editor must be exclusive to The Times and may be edited. Please include a full address and daytime telephone number.

Cuts to local radio

Sir As a BBC local radio editor for 25 years I always pushed for change. I never thought the status quo was good enough but at the core of every change was a desire for more localness. One of the most successful commercial radio executives once told me that "localness is your USP, it's something you can make your own as commercial radio is merging into national networks". The plans by BBC bosses will result in less local programming ("Anger as BBC merges local radio output" Dec 2; letters, Dec 3 & 5). In an age of increasing emphasis on local democracy and levelling up, the BBC should be investing more in local radio, not less.
David Robey
Editor, BBC Radio London 1999-2020

Park guardians

Sir, The letter (Dec 7) from National Park officials is welcome. However, it omits the crucial point that the overwhelming majority of these areas are privately owned and managed by farmers and landowners. Rather than increasing bureaucracy, the constructive way forward must be to encourage and then harness their enthusiasm, energy and expertise.
Philip Merricks
Elmley National Nature Reserve, Isle of Sheppey, Kent

Comfort zone

Sir, I am unimpressed by the mattresses of Sathnam Sanghera (Notebook, Dec 5) and George Hart (letter, Dec 6), which have served for only 16 and 36 years respectively . Ours is the king-size Van-o-Pedic model once made by the Vanleigh corporation of New Jersey, and we bought it in New York in 1967. It is still comfortable 55 years later.
Kath Boothman
Cheltenham

Reach for the top

Sir, Giles Coren asks: "What exactly are tall people for?" (Notebook, Dec 6). I am 6ft 2in. Nearly every time I go to a supermarket I am asked by a person shorter than me to retrieve an article from the top shelf. I have other uses, but that is the most frequent.
Adrian R Holroyd
Kingswear, Devon

Book non-signings

Sir, I have the dubious distinction of having been a no-show at my own book signing ("Book signing no-shows are a humiliating rite of passage", Dec 7). A car fire on the M4 and resulting gridlock meant that by the time I arrived any readers had long since wandered off. On then being approached by a customer my excitement at a potential sale was dashed when she asked if the car park outside the shop charged on Saturdays, and if so whether I had any change.
Guy Morpuss KC
Author of *Five Minds* and *Black Lake Manor*; Farnham, Surrey

Sir, Sadly, as an author I was never offered a book signing. I approached my nearest bookshop in Muswell Hill to ask if they'd be interested in hosting a launch, stressing that I was a local author. The manager wearily replied: "Sir, everyone in north London is a local author."
David Staples
Editor of *Modern Theatres 1950-2020*; London N10

DAYLIGHT MURDER IN DUBLIN

FROM THE TIMES DECEMBER 8, 1922

Dublin was profoundly shocked today at the news that one of the members of the new Free State Parliament had been murdered in the city's streets, while another had been seriously wounded. Mr Sean Hales member for West Cork, the late Michael Collins's constituency, and Mr Padraig O'Maille, member for Galway, who yesterday was elected Deputy-Speaker of the new House, had luncheon together at the Ormond Hotel, Ormond Quay. At about 2.30 they left the hotel to attend the meeting of Parliament and, having called a jaunting car, were shaking hands with the proprietor, who is a relative of one of them, when they were attacked by a band of armed men who were lying in wait for them along the quays. Several shots were fired, and Mr Hales fell immediately, shot through the temple and the lungs. Mr O'Maille was wounded in the back and side, but fortunately his wounds are unlikely to prove fatal. While the shooting was in progress a touring car carrying a British non-commissioned officer and a driver passed along the quays. The soldiers heard the shots, and saw three men running away. The car was stopped at once, and the NCO, drawing his revolver, gave chase. He pursued them through a maze of back streets, firing as he ran, but they dashed into a tenement house and disappeared. When the Parliament assembled at 3 o'clock President Cosgrave announced the news of the murder, and the whole House was thunderstruck. All stood in silence for a few minutes, and then the House adjourned.

The death of Sean Hales is regretted deeply by everybody who knew him. In the days of the fighting against the British he was a prominent leader of the IRA in County Cork, and, with his brother Tom, was one of the most badly "wanted" men in Southern Ireland. When the Treaty was signed, however, he showed a spirit of great moderation, and his influence in Co Cork was largely responsible for the success of the Collins-Griffith policy in that part of the country. Mr Padraig O'Maille is one of the most popular members of the Irish Parliament. He is a well-known Celtic scholar, and easily the most fluent Irish speaker in the Dail. He is a remarkably fine type of Irishman and a physical giant.

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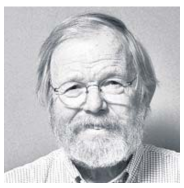
UK: Annual Ucas report on acceptance, offer and entry rates; ONS publishes data from census 2021 on travel to work in England and Wales last year.

Nature notes



"What's that?" someone shouted. We looked over to see a large, whiskered snout emerge midstream in the River Tyne. The snout became a hefty, grey head — a seal. In a flurry of flipper, water and jaws, it threw up a large fish and began to eat. "It's got a salmon!" someone else called. Thousands of grey seals breed on the Farne Islands, and a few of the most adventurous often drift miles inland on the salt tides that run up the Tyne. Like all our waterways, the Tyne is regularly pumped with sewage and agrichemicals. Imagine what we might see here if this famous river was treated properly. JONATHAN TULLOCH

Birthdays today



Bill Bryson, *pictured*, writer, *Notes from a Small Island* (1996), 71; **John Banville**, novelist, *The Sea* (2005, Man Booker prizewinner), 77; **Kim Basinger**, actress, *Batman* (1989), 69; **Prof Thomas Cech**, chemist, 1989 Nobel prizewinner for co-discovering the catalytic properties of RNA, 75; **Louis de Bernières**, novelist, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (1994), 68; **Richard Desmond**, proprietor, Express Newspapers (2000-18), Channel 5 (2010-14), 71; **Bobby Elliott**, drummer, the Hollies, 81; **Gita Gopinath**, first deputy managing director, International Monetary Fund, 51; **David Harewood**, actor, *Homeland* (2011-12), 57; **Teri Hatcher**, actress, *Desperate Housewives* (2004-12), 58; **Barbara Hulanicki**, designer, founder of the clothes store Biba, 86; **Sir Geoff Hurst**, footballer, England (1966-72), the only player to score a hat-trick in a men's World Cup final, 81; **Baroness (Anne) Jenkin of Kennington**, co-founder (2005), Women2Win campaign for more female Conservative MPs, 67; **Sir Derek Jones**, chairman, Keolis (transport group), permanent secretary to the Welsh government (2012-17), 70; **Amir Khan**, boxer, world light-welterweight champion (2009-12), 36; **Jimmy Lai**, media tycoon and Hong Kong pro-democracy figure, 75; **Rt Rev Libby Lane, bishop of Derby**, the Church of England's first female bishop (2015), 56; **Lord (Peter) Levene of Portsoken**, chairman, Lloyd's (2002-11), 81; **Laurence Marks**, screenwriter, *Birds of a Feather* (1989-2017), 74; **Nicki Minaj**, rapper, *Bang Bang* (2014), 40; **Jordan Nobbs**, footballer, Arsenal and England, 30; **Sinéad O'Connor**, singer-songwriter, *Nothing Compares 2 U* (1990), 56; **Raheem Sterling**, footballer, Chelsea and England, 28; **Sir David Verey**, banker, chairman, advisory committee on the government art collection, Art Fund (2004-14), 72; **Amanda Vickery**, historian, writer and broadcaster, professor of early modern history, Queen Mary University of London, 60; **James Waldegrave**, **Earl Waldegrave**, 82.

On this day

In **1941** the US declared war on Japan, in response to the surprise attack on the US navy base at Pearl Harbor the previous day.

The last word

"I mused for a few moments on the question of which was worse, to lead a life so boring that you are easily enchanted or a life so full of stimulus that you are easily bored." Bill Bryson, *The Lost Continent: Travels in Small-Town America* (1989).

Learning on the Job

A greater share of apprentices than ever are from middle-class areas. But more must be done to improve access to skills training

Historically, no qualification has been saddled with quite so much cultural baggage as the apprenticeship. For decades the word alone evoked visions of tea-making and drudgery. To admit one's child was enrolled upon a course of workplace training was to fail the apocryphal "dinner party test" for aspirational middle-class parents. But times have changed. Now it is young people from low-income backgrounds who are least likely to join top apprenticeship schemes. In the most affluent parts of Britain, meanwhile, uptake of apprenticeships is increasing. The latter, at least, is a success story worth noting.

New research from the Sutton Trust, the social mobility charity, has found that the share of apprenticeships of all levels — from GCSE to degree equivalents — has risen in wealthy areas. In 2015 it stood at 14 per cent. It now stands at 18 per cent. That progress, while modest, is to be welcomed. If nothing else, it shows that the damage done by Labour's arbitrary target that 50 per cent of all school leavers should go to university may yet be undone. In the most deprived areas of the country, meanwhile, the opposite is true. That share has fallen from 26 per cent to 20 per cent.

There is reason to be optimistic about these numbers, as worrying as any fall in access to good vocational training in the very poorest parts of Britain may seem. Ministers have long talked the talk on establishing skills education as a mainstream option for the middle classes, without walking the walk. The findings suggest that moves to offer apprenticeships by blue chip employers, among them the likes of Rolls-Royce, BAE, Google, Meta and Morgan Stanley, are bearing fruit. This, unquestionably, is a positive. There is seldom a better substitute for learning on the job, even for youths from wealthy backgrounds.

Yet there is another, familiar message to be drawn from the findings as to the state of vocational education more broadly: must do better. The increase in the share of apprentices from middle-class areas has coincided with a steep decline in the number of apprenticeships more generally, which fell by almost a quarter between 2017 and 2018 after the government introduced the apprenticeship levy, and then by a further 18 per cent from 2018 to 2021.

The latter period, of course, coincides with the pandemic. But it is nonetheless worrying that numbers have not yet rebounded, with 11 per cent fewer apprentices starting their courses this year than in 2019. The data also suggests that a majority of those enrolled on the highest level apprenticeships, those equivalent to degrees, are aged over 25. If ministers are aiming to broaden participation in vocational education among school leavers and young people who otherwise might be tempted by a degree course of middling merit, then there is evidently room for improvement.

One person who ought to understand the urgent case for strengthening skills education better than most is the new education secretary. Gillian Keegan began her own working life as a 16-year-old apprentice in a car factory. Her appointment in October was widely interpreted as a sign that Rishi Sunak was committed to an education system that truly prepared young people for working life in a high-tech economy.

Today's figures should spur her to take the steps needed to improve provision. They should include reform of the apprenticeship levy, the 0.5 per cent tax on a firm's total payroll. Given the fall in overall numbers since its introduction, it is difficult to make a case for its success. Concerns remain, meanwhile, about the quality of some apprenticeships and the thousands who enrol then drop out: almost half did so in 2021. The challenge is to make high-quality training available to young people of all backgrounds, wherever they live. The benefits to the economy will dwarf any costs.

Extremist Dreams

However ludicrous, plans for a coup reveal dangers on the right in Germany

The coup to overthrow the German state, purportedly planned by a motley array of conspiracy theorists, neo-Nazis and imperial nostalgists, is as bizarre as it seems unlikely. To Germany, however, it is no laughing matter. However absurd the claims and the grievances, the plotters appeared to have broad-based support and, ominously, included soldiers, a former member of parliament and even a judge who were prepared to use guns and violence to topple the federal republic's elected government. It took years of surveillance by German counter-intelligence, 150 raids across 11 German states and the arrest of 25 ringleaders to uncover the scale of the plot by the extremist Reichsbürgers (Citizens of the Reich) movement.

That they had any hope of overthrowing one of Europe's most stable, democratic and prosperous states would seem to outsiders highly unlikely. But Germans have bitter memories. Though the attempted Munich putsch in 1923 failed, history knows what its ringleader, a young Adolf Hitler, went on to do. And there have been other examples elsewhere of attempts to storm the citadels of power: in post-fascist Spain in 1981 and last year on Capitol Hill. The plots failed but the political consequences were huge.

Germans have been shocked not simply by the numbers involved, with some 21,000 members of the Citizens of the Reich movement, but by the commitment to violence of so many disparate groups. At least 1,150 are involved in far-right extremism, more than 2,000 are ready to use violence, and most regard the modern German state as illegitimate. Not surprisingly, neo-Nazis, a fringe group under constant surveillance, are included. But so too are nostalgics hankering for the German empire before 1918, who wanted to install Heinrich XIII Prinz Reuss, a Thuringian aristocrat, as the new leader. In addition the movement has swept up those inspired by QAnon, the American conspiracists, opponents of the Covid lockdowns and those angered by the recent influx of refugees and migrants, egged on by Moscow.

Populists and extremists are making gains in many European countries, and the hard right can now claim to lead the government in Italy, is growing in Spain and is well represented in the French parliament. In Germany, however, the rise of the right is seen as more dangerous and more destabilising, especially as the Alternative for Germany party has steadily won seats in the Bundestag as its policies have become more openly racist and extreme. And the climate for extremism is worryingly familiar. The German economy is struggling with high energy prices, inflation and a global slowdown. It is still coping relatively well compared with some of its neighbours, but Germans have taken prosperity for granted for many years. They have also been shaken by the Ukraine war that has forced a reassessment of Germany's role in Europe and a rapid rethink of its defence and security posture. And a year since the coalition under Olaf Scholz took power, there are growing questions over his lacklustre performance and hesitations over the robust policies he announced a year ago. It is not Weimar, but gone are the certainties of Angela Merkel's long tenure.

The ludicrous Prinz Reuss plot has been crushed. But the worry is that more extremism is on the horizon. German intelligence needs to be vigilant, especially over those with access to arms. Conspiracy ideologies are dangerously catching.

Queen of the Skies

The last 747 has rolled off the assembly line at Boeing

The first Boeing 747s were delivered in 1969 to two airlines — TWA and Pan Am — that no longer exist. This week the final, 1,574th model left the factory in Everett outside Seattle. It will enter service as a freighter for an American company next year. While the iconic silhouette will live on for a while yet, not least in the form of the two US presidential aircraft, the sight of a 747 overhead somewhere in the world's skies will cease to be a familiar one.

Many factors gave rise to the era of mass air transit which began in the 1970s, but the emergence of a four-engine, wide-bodied jet able to carry 500-plus passengers 7,000 miles without refuelling was chief among them. The 747 changed the economics of air travel. While the rich could still enjoy the luxury of turning left, bordering on decadence if you were one of the select few wealthy enough to climb the spiral stairs to first class, the 747's carrying capacity was such that most of its seats could be offered at an affordable price.

For the first time, people on relatively unspectacular salaries could fly long haul. It is no exaggeration to state that over the past half century this development has changed the world, literally widening the horizons of tens of millions of travellers.

The planet now relies more on digital than physical connectivity, while environmental concerns favour two engines over four. The pandemic and its aftermath are reshaping air travel in ways yet to be fully determined or understood. Thus, through no fault of its own, the era of this much-loved design classic, familiar to anyone who has ever "slipped the surly bonds of earth/And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings", is drawing to a close. The 747 retires safe in the knowledge of a job well done.

World

Judge among far-right plotters

Germany
David Crossland Berlin

Soldiers, a right-wing judge and an aristocrat with pretensions to become Germany's new leader were arrested yesterday on suspicion of plotting to storm the Reichstag and overthrow the German government.

Investigators said last night that at least two dozen armed men and women had planned to force their way into the parliament in Berlin and handcuff MPs and ministers in a violent coup d'état.

The plot, involving members of the Reichsbürger anti-establishment movement and far-right conspiracy theorists influenced by the American QAnon movement, aimed to eliminate the existing state order "by military means", prosecutors said.

More than 3,000 police launched dawn raids across the country early yesterday and arrested 25 suspects. Members of the elite GSG 9 commando unit took part in the operation at 150 homes, offices and storage sites, including a barracks of the KSK special forces command, the equivalent of the SAS.

Those arrested are accused of forming a terrorist group last year led by Heinrich XIII Prinz Reuss, 71, an aristocrat who owns an estate in the eastern state of Thuringia, and a former paratroop commander named only as Rüdiger von P, 69.

The plotters had formed a military and political wing and were trying to recruit soldiers with access to weapons, investigators said. Among those arrested was a serving commando with the KSK, and a former member of parliament for the hard-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, Birgit Malsack-Winkemann, 58, who is a judge in Berlin.

The suspects, most aged over 40, include a gourmet chef, a roofer who organised anti-Covid policy protests in the Black Forest, a pilot at a commercial German airline and a classical tenor who, it was envisaged, would take over the culture ministry under Heinrich, who saw himself as the new "regent".

Prosecutors said the group was convinced that its aims could only be realised "by using military means and violence against state representatives. This includes carrying out homicides." The members signed a confidentiality

Nazi typist deflects blame

Irmgard Furchner, 97, accused of playing a role in the murders of 11,380 people at the Stutthof Nazi concentration camp, issued an apology as her 14-month trial drew to a close but refused to admit any guilt. "I am sorry for everything that happened," she told the court in Itzehoe, northern Germany. "I regret that I was in Stutthof at that time. That's all I can say."

During the last two years of the war Furchner was a typist for the commandant. The prosecution said it was impossible that she did not know about the killings, as the office overlooked the camp, and her job involved typing execution warrants, orders for the operation of the gas chambers and lists of prisoners earmarked for Auschwitz. The verdict is expected on December 20.



Behind the story

Germany's extreme right, never noted for its sanity or coherence, has become an increasingly deranged gumbo of conspiracy theories and state-smashing fantasies, stretching from imperial nostalgists and QAnon disciples to antivaxers and neo-Nazis (Oliver Moody writes). Yesterday's dawn arrests provided a fascinating cross-section of fringe groups united only by their loathing of modern liberal democracy and their readiness to use any means to overturn it.

The pressure has been building for years. Since the 2015 migration crisis, German police have uncovered bizarre plots to bring the constitutional order crashing down through a civil war, often referred to as "Day X". One army lieutenant led a double life as a fake refugee from Syria, with the intention of assassinating ministers and unleashing fury against immigrants. That investigation led to the discovery of the Hannibal network, a tangle of interlinked far-right chat groups in which dozens of police officers, soldiers, security officials and even judges discussed their plans for the impending collapse of the German social order.

What has changed in the past three years is that the pandemic restrictions have loosely soldered together an inchoate mass of resentment that these groups hope to mobilise into an uprising, fanned by the right-wing populists of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party. In August 2020 a lockdown protest in Berlin boiled over into an attempt to seize the Reichstag building as 300 to 400 demonstrators broke through the barricades, aided and abetted from within parliament by a handful of AfD MPs. This year, security agencies have been warning of a "hot winter" in which extremist factions would compete to channel public anger into an assault on the state.

The latest alleged conspiracy to occupy the Reichstag is remarkable for its breadth. Its ringleader is said to be a Thuringian aristocrat who styles himself as Heinrich XIII Prinz Reuss, a distant scion of the dynasty that once ruled one of the micro-states that were folded into the German empire in 1871.

A property investor based in Frankfurt who has been linked to a British asset management company, Prinz Reuss is alleged to have been known to police as a prominent figure in the Reichebürger (Reich Citizens) movement, whose 20,000 members believe the postwar German republic is constitutionally illegitimate. The plotters are said to have planned to install Prinz Reuss at the head of a military transitional government to head off a rival coup by the "Alliance", a supposed secret society of "deep-state" officials colluding to subjugate Germany in concert with foreign powers such as Russia and the United States. Yet the Reich Citizens were not acting alone. Prinz Reuss's alleged co-conspirators include the Berlin judge and former AfD MP Birgit Malsack-Winkemann, 58, who is claimed to have been earmarked as his justice minister, tasked with securing the loyalty of the German judiciary.

There were also a number of raids on addresses associated with present and former soldiers in the German armed forces, 1,242 of whose members were under investigation by military counterintelligence last year for suspected right-wing extremist tendencies.

Germany's domestic intelligence agency, the BfV, estimates that there are about 13,500 right-wing extremists prepared to use violence to achieve their objectives. It seems almost certain this will not be the last coup plot of its kind.

New York mayor is losing the rat race
Page 39



Ayatollah's sister calls for end to 'tyranny' in Iran
Page 40

arrested over coup





BORIS ROESSLER/AP; ACHILLE ABBOUD/NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES; CHRISTIAN MANG/REUTERS



The aristocrat Heinrich XIII Prinz Reuss handcuffed in Frankfurt yesterday, one of 25 suspects arrested across the country, with officers in Berlin, right, and elsewhere collecting evidence from 150 sites. Conspiracy theories have been gaining traction in Germany in recent years, culminating in antivax protests at the Reichstag in 2020 and at other government buildings

agreement, with anyone who violated it facing a death penalty. They obtained Iridium satellite phones worth about €20,000 to communicate if the mobile phone network collapsed.

A wealthy female doctor is said to have been in charge of "spiritual issues" and donated €20,000 to help to fund the plot. The group was also in close contact with two psychics responsible for vetting potential recruits.

The prosecutors said that a wider network of up to 52 people was linked to the plot, raising the prospect of further arrests.

"The association has set itself the goal of eliminating the existing state order in Germany, the free democratic basic order," Peter Frank, the federal prosecutor, told a briefing. "It combines the rejection of the state institutions in Germany with conspiracy myths consisting of various narratives of the Reichsbürger ideology and the QAnon ideology," he added, referring to the American conspiracy theory that inspired the riot at the US Capitol on January 6 last year.

Frank said the group of plotters had a political and a military arm, including former soldiers. The political wing called itself "the council". Prinz Reuss, an independent financial adviser based in Frankfurt, held meetings for the plotters at his estate in Thuringia, outlining an administration that would feature Malsack-Winkemann as justice minister.

Prinz Reuss is estranged from the House of Reuss, which ruled parts of Germany for hundreds of years. In August a spokesman for the family described him as an old man subject to "conspiracy-theory misconceptions".

Frank said the group's military arm hoped "to build up a new German army and consists of homeland security units, which have yet to be formed".

Some Reichsbürger members have declared mini-kingdoms and issued their own passports. They were dismissed as cranks until 2016 when members were involved in a gunfight with police and one officer was killed. They have been targeted in a general crackdown on the far right in Germany in recent years after being tied to racist killings and terrorist attacks. They are believed to have links with QAnon.

The arrest of Malsack-Winkemann has fuelled concern about the role of the AfD in far-right and conspiracy theory movements. The prosecutor's office said: "The suspects are united by a deep rejection of the state institutions and the free democratic basic order of the Federal Republic of Germany, which over time has led to their decision to participate in their violent elimination and to engage in concrete acts of preparation for this.

"They are firmly convinced that Germany is being ruled by members of a 'deep state'. Liberation is promised by the imminent intervention of the 'Alliance', a technically superior secret alliance of governments, intelligence services and militaries of various states, including the Russian Federation as well as the United States of America."

Peter Neumann, a terrorism expert, said the plotters believed that about a hundred people were enough to carry out a coup d'état in Germany. "That is, of course, a delusion," he said. "But it would have been capable of carrying out terrorist attacks. People would probably have died in the process."

Nancy Faeser, the interior minister, said: "Further investigation will give a picture of how far the plans for a coup had progressed."

Conspiracy ideologies are no laughing matter, leading article, page 35
Scholz struggles with a discontented nation, thetimes.co.uk

We're not mad, says Putin in new threat to West

Russia
Marc Bennetts

President Putin insisted yesterday that he had not lost his mind as he warned of the growing threat of nuclear war and accused Poland of seeking to seize western Ukraine.

In televised remarks Putin said that he and other senior Russian officials understood very well the power of nuclear weapons. "We have not gone mad," he said, adding that Moscow would deploy its nuclear arsenal, the largest in the world, only in the event of a nuclear attack on Russia. He warned, however, that the Kremlin would defend its territory and its allies with "all available means".

Putin vowed in September that Russia would use nuclear weapons to defend four Ukrainian regions that it claims as its own. He later appeared to backtrack on the comments, however.

In often rambling comments to the Kremlin's Human Rights Council, Putin also claimed "nationalist groups" in Poland were plotting to annex areas of western Ukraine. Putin and other Russian officials have voiced similar allegations in recent weeks but Moscow has not provided evidence to back up its accusation.

Putin gave no indication that Russia intends to wind down its invasion. "As for the duration of the special military operation, well, of course, this can be a lengthy process," Putin said. He added that he saw "no sense", however, in a new round of mobilisation. He said that of 300,000 reservists called up after the Kremlin announced a nationwide draft in September, 77,000 "defenders of the fatherland" were now involved in combat operations.

Putin's comments came as Time magazine named President Zelensky and the spirit of Ukraine as "person of the year". In Washington, there were efforts to avert an escalation in the almost ten-month conflict after suspected Ukrainian drone strikes hit military facilities deep inside Russia.

Two long-range bombers were damaged this week by suspected Ukrainian drones, including an attack on the Engels airfield near Saratov, almost 400 miles inside Russia. Explosions also tore through military facilities in Ryazan, about 120 miles south of Moscow, and Kursk, 60 miles from the Ukrainian border. Russia has used the airfields to launch bombing raids on Ukraine. The United States said it had nothing to do with the attacks. "We have neither encouraged nor enabled the Ukrainians to strike inside of Russia," Antony Blinken, the US secretary of state, said. He did not criticise the strikes.

The British defence ministry said the Kremlin would be likely to consider the attacks among Russia's "most strategically significant failures" since the start of the war.



President Zelensky and the spirit of Ukraine were named Time magazine's "person of the year"

Indians seek to put British empire trams back on track

India
Amrit Dhillon Delhi

When Lord Curzon arrived in Calcutta, the viceroy now remembered for his aristocratic disdain and vitriolic wit was quick to recognise the value of its trams.

He installed electric cars in the capital of the Raj in part so that police could move quickly to catch independence-minded locals in their seditious plotting. Since its heyday, however, India's oldest surviving tram network has been greatly diminished.

At its height, 460 trams trundled round the city on 48 routes. Now only eight are left on two routes, but Dr Debasish Bhattacharya, 66, the president of the Calcutta Tram Users' Association, wants to change that.

"The trams were a central part of everyone's lives," he said. "Everything was done by tram — going to school, romance, shopping, socialising. They are not a form of transport for us, they are part of our literature, our poetry, our cinema, a part of our culture."

The tram cars have been disappearing since the 1960s, victims of state neglect. They have lost out to the metro, cars, buses and scooters.

Bhattacharya disputes the transport ministry's claim that fewer people want to use the trams. "As more roads and cars came in, no one built proper stops where people could board the trams and get off safely in the middle of the mad traffic. That's what put some people off," he said.

The users' association is holding a meeting on Christmas Eve to persuade the transport ministry to take reviving the network seriously. Bhattacharya said that Calcutta developed and grew as a city around the network. "Instead of spending money on electric buses, why not use an existing network which is cheap to run and non-polluting, and, what's more, is our living heritage and part of the city's identity?" he said.



Black Hawk downed by new US helicopter

The Black Hawk helicopter, which featured in one of the US army's most disastrous counter-insurgency operations, in Somalia nearly 30 years ago, is to be replaced in a multibillion-dollar programme awarded this week (Michael Evans writes).

Nineteen members of the US special forces died when two of the helicopters were shot down over Mogadishu in 1993, as depicted in the film *Black Hawk Down*.

The twin-engined UH-60 Black Hawk, built by Sikorsky, has been one of the army's main troop-carrying helicopters, in use since the 1970s. It served extensively in Iraq and Afghanistan and, alongside the twin-rotor Chinook, carried the special forces teams who killed Osama bin Laden in Pakistan in 2011. Now it is to be replaced by the V-280 helicopter built by Bell, beating a joint rival bid by Sikorsky and Boeing.

Bell has been awarded an initial contract worth $232 million to develop the aircraft, which will be a tilt-rotor helicopter, similar to the V-22 Osprey already in service. The tilt-rotor system allows the helicopter to fly at speeds equivalent to a fixed-wing aircraft. A prototype is due by 2025. Once foreign buyers are factored in, the project could earn $70 billion for Bell, which is owned by Textron, based in Fort Worth, Texas.

The Black Hawk was modified for an array of US military and official roles as well as being sold to several countries. The VH-60N is designated Marine One when carrying the US president.

During the incident in Somalia, two helicopters packed with special forces soldiers were hit by rocket-propelled grenades fired by militia forces under the command of the warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid.

The plan had been to snatch two of Aidid's senior lieutenants from a stronghold in Mogadishu, involving about 160 American troops. Instead, the helicopters were shot down and the dead soldiers were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu.

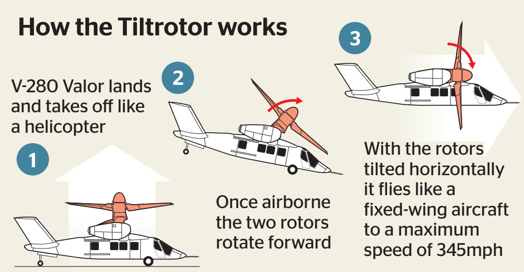
Hundreds of Somalis were killed in the ensuing battle, which lasted two days.

Special forces-adapted Black Hawks, known as MH-60s, were used during the mission to kill Bin Laden.

One of the helicopters crashed when trying to land in the compound where the al-Qaeda leader was living, but there were no American casualties and Seal Team Six commandos were able to evacuate on other aircraft after completing their mission.

● The US has said it will base more long-range nuclear bombers in Australia and increase its rotations of jet fighters, troops and visits by navy ships as China continues to extend its influence in the Pacific.

Separately, Japan has increased its target for military spending over the next five years to £257 billion, 1.5 times the present level, to bolster its defences against Chinese expansionism.



China abandons zero-Covid ambition

China
Wendy Tang

China has ended its toughest Covid prevention measures, a week after nationwide protests erupted over the severity of lockdowns.

Covid tests and health-code checks will no longer be required in many circumstances, and people with mild symptoms may isolate at home instead of being forced into quarantine. Nurseries, care facilities for the elderly and schools will still require tests.

A limit on over-the-counter cold remedies, designed to prevent people treating coronavirus at home, has also been lifted, but the state urged people not to rush out and buy them. "We urge [you] not to blindly stock up, please buy rationally," Guo Yanhong, the director of the medical emergency department of the national health commission, said yesterday.

Under the new measures, lockdowns will last no longer than five days unless additional cases are discovered in the area. They are also limited to apartment floors and buildings, rather than entire districts and neighbourhoods.

The health commission urged local authorities to " "rectify simplified, one-size-fits-all" measures for Covid prevention, and to reject and overcome "formalism and bureaucracy". The announcement came after President Xi, who regards China's relentless fight against Covid as one of his main achievements, chaired a meeting of the Communist Party's politburo.

Cities across China were gripped by protests over tough Covid policies last month, in rare public defiance against the government. Although those protests petered out in days amid a heavy police presence, cities and regions around the country have started announcing an easing of controls.

Officials have also been softening their tone on the health risks of the virus — bringing China closer to what other countries have been saying for more than a year, as they dropped restrictions and shifted their focus towards living with the virus.


Xi arriving in Saudi Arabia yesterday for the first China-Arab States Summit

Analysis

Six weeks ago, at the Communist Party Congress, Xi Jinping was a figure of uncompromising power (Richard Lloyd Parry writes).

Installed for an unprecedented third term, he had the aura of a man subject to none of the forces that constrain democratic leaders. He batted aside complaints about oppression in Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet, aggression in the South and East China Sea, and menaces towards Taiwan.

He was equally unbending about eradicating coronavirus, whatever the cost to freedom and economic activity. "People's lives come first," he said. "We will not waver in our zero-Covid policy."

But yesterday, with a bureaucratic wave of the hand, zero-Covid is, if not dismantled, then drastically relaxed. There had been passionate protests across China, some explicitly calling for Xi's resignation.

What does his U-turn mean for politics, and for his unbending style?

The protests undoubtedly surprised and alarmed the Chinese leadership, but they were not the only reason for a change in policy. Economically, zero-Covid has hit hard in a country in which steady growth and a sense of increasing affluence are the trade-off for a lack of democratic rights. It may be that parts of the political elite, if not Xi himself, wanted an excuse to ease the restrictions.

The protests would have felt all the more uncomfortable for party elders, coinciding as they did with the death of the former leader Jiang Zemin, a relaxed and permissive figure compared with Xi. It was the funeral of a liberal CCP leader, Hu Yaobang, that set in motion the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989.

In Hong Kong in 2019, protests against a new extradition law became fiercer after the government stepped down. It is too early to assume that this will happen on the mainland, and that having achieved a victory on Covid, anti-government activists will be emboldened to expand their campaign. The government's censorship of the media, including cyberspace, and the ruthlessness of the security apparatus, would make this a dangerous and difficult undertaking.

Many Chinese will be grateful to Xi for showing flexibility and making their lives easier.

It all depends on how the pandemic unfolds. Elderly Chinese, most vulnerable to serious illness and death, are the least-vaccinated section of the population, and the Chinese vaccines that Beijing has deployed are less effective than foreign mRNA jabs.

The independent medical consensus is that the country faces a difficult period in which infections and serious illness are likely to surge and hospitals to come under intense pressure. How will Chinese react to a new world in which they are freer to move, but more likely to die? With acceptance, or with anger? Nobody, not even Chinese themselves, yet knows the answer.

Trump faces wider inquiry on vote fixing

United States

David Charter, Hugh Tomlinson Washington

A federal investigator has widened his inquiry into election interference by Donald Trump in 2020 in a fresh blow to the former president after his Senate candidate in Georgia was defeated.

Jack Smith, the special counsel and a former war crimes judge, issued subpoenas to officials in the swing states of Arizona, Michigan and Wisconsin for all their communications with Trump over a scheme to change the outcome of the 2020 election.

In Georgia, Herschel Walker, a novice candidate chosen by Trump, was rejected in the final race of the midterm elections to give Democrats a 51 to 49 majority in the US Senate. Walker delivered a concession speech, unlike Trump, in which he urged his supporters to "continue to believe in the constitution and … our elected officials".

Trump has refused to concede the 2020 election, and called for the "termination" of the US constitution so he could become president again.

Smith was brought back from The Hague to lead two investigations into Trump — one on the retention of "classified documents and other presidential records" and another into "whether any person or entity unlawfully interfered with a transfer of power following the 2020 presidential election".

Smith does not appear to have contacted Georgia, where the district attorney in Fulton County, which includes Atlanta, is holding a separate investigation into the activities of Trump and his allies over the 2020 election. Voters on Tuesday backed Raphael Warnock, a Baptist pastor, to retain his Senate seat for the Democrats by 51.4 per cent to 48.6 per cent, with a few votes still to be counted.

Walker's defeat is another flop by a novice candidate promoted by Trump, after several other fumbles in Senate seats and races to be governor. For the first time since 1934, the party of the president did not lose a Senate incumbent in the midterms, when the opposition usually makes gains.

Democrats picked up a seat in Pennsylvania last month, to change the 50-50 split in the Senate of the past two years.

Warnock, 53, who last year became the first black senator elected from Georgia, paid tribute to his mother in his victory speech. "She grew up in the 1950s … picking someone else's cotton and someone else's tobacco," he said. "But tonight she helped pick her youngest son to be a United States senator."

Warnock condemned the "forces trying to divide our country". He compared the fight against Republican efforts to suppress the vote in Georgia to the struggle of civil rights leaders.

"Our ballot is a blood-stained ballot," he said. "We stand on the shoulders of the martyrs. You can't lead the people unless you love the people. You can't love the people unless you know the people. And you can't know the people unless you walk among the people."

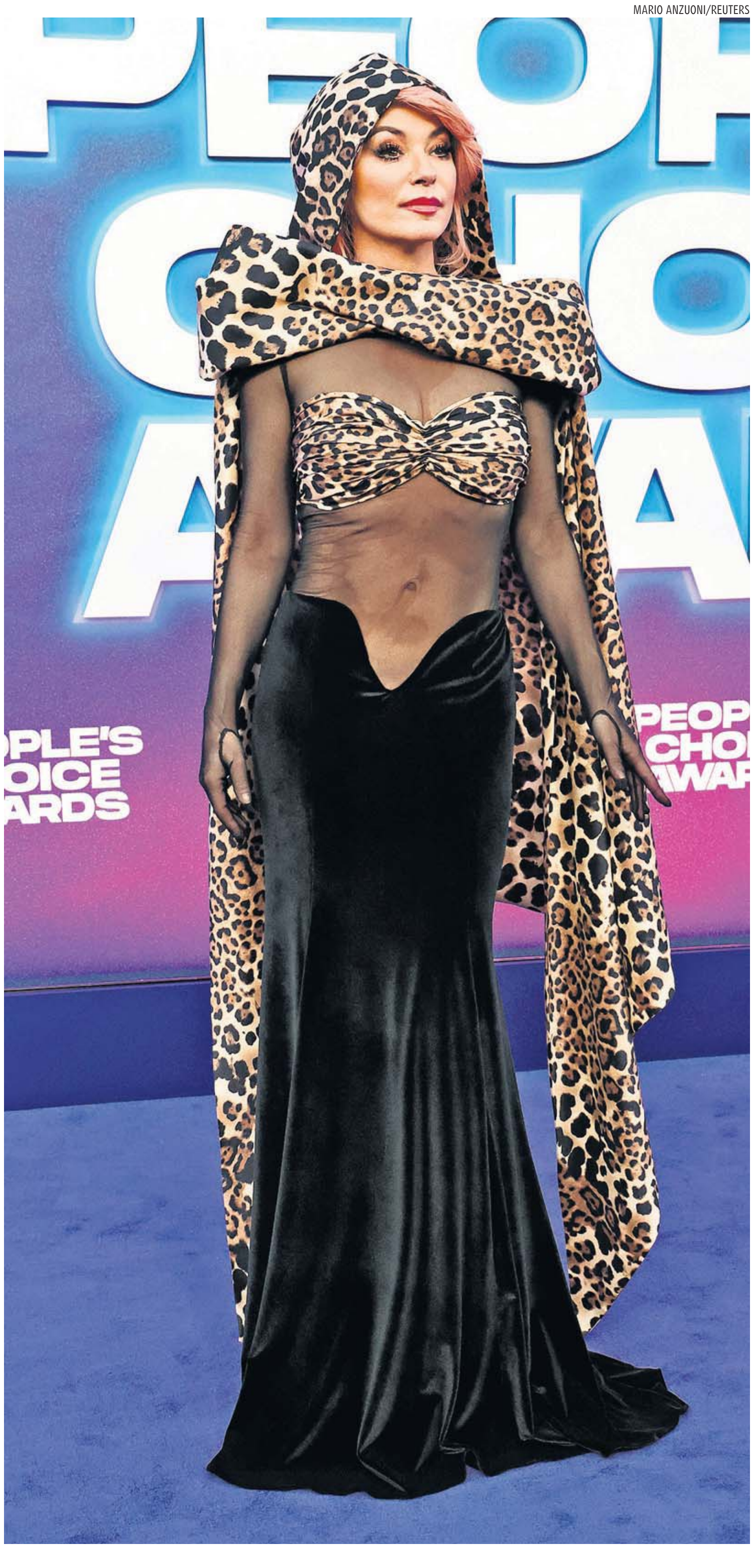
Walker, 60, was beset by scandals. He was accused of hiding the existence of three children, and two former girlfriends alleged that he had pressured them to have abortions. They said they came forward because of Walker's policy to oppose abortion, even in cases of incest or rape.

Walker told supporters to believe in the elected officials. "Most of all, continue to pray for them," he added. "Don't let anyone separate you."

On his Truth Social network, Trump posted: "OUR COUNTRY IS IN BIG TROUBLE. WHAT A MESS!"

Two more classified items have been found by lawyers acting for Trump who searched a storage unit near his Mar-a-Lago home in Florida, it emerged yesterday, adding to the hoard already discovered. The latest findings were in a stash of materials from an office in Virginia used by Trump's staff after he left office, the Washington Post reported.

MARIO ANZUONI/REUTERS



Still the one Shania Twain, the Canadian country star, performed at the People's Choice awards in Santa Monica, California, and accepted a music icon award at 57

President arrested after power grab

Peru

Stephen Gibbs Caracas

President Castillo of Peru was arrested last night and charged with "rebellion" hours after he tried to dissolve his country's elected parliament to rule by decree.

The maverick left-wing leader, who has been resisting impeachment attempts on corruption charges since he took office last year, announced his power grab in a televised address. The army and police swiftly issued a joint statement saying they would not back a "break in the constitutional order".

Congress went ahead with a planned impeachment vote, formally removing Castillo, 53, from power. He was replaced by his vice-president, Dina Boluarte, who becomes Peru's first female head of state and can rule until 2026, when Castillo's term was due to end. "As we all know, there has been an attempted coup d'état," Boluarte, 60, told a stunned congress after being sworn in. "I request a political truce to install a government of national unity."

By then her predecessor had been detained by Lima police after what some reports suggested was an abortive attempt to reach the Mexican embassy and request asylum. His escape was foiled by the capital city's notorious traffic jams, local media claimed.

Castillo's strategy was seen as echoing a similar move made by the former president Alberto Fujimori, who was elected democratically in 1990 but went on to dissolve congress in 1992 and then ruled as a dictator until 2000.

Castillo, a former primary school teacher and union leader with no previous political experience, was the unexpected winner of last year's elections.

The first Peruvian leader to come from a poor farming community in the nation's 200-year history, his rule was marked by chaos. He changed his cabinet five times in 18 months and sacked 60 officials. He and his family face a series of corruption investigations linked to public works projects.

Before yesterday's vote Castillo had pleaded his innocence. "I am not corrupt," he said. "I am a man from the countryside who has been paying for the mistakes of his inexperience but who has never committed a crime."

Populist's golden touch fails him where it matters most

David Charter

Comment

Donald Trump has an impressive success rate in endorsing Republican candidates but, as the Georgia Senate race showed, he failed where it really mattered.

Overall, 85 per cent of Trump's choices — 215 out of 254 — won in the midterm elections, the Ballotpedia website suggests. In the key seats, however, he backed losers.

Most of his choices were in safe Republican seats but of the 36 most competitive House races, as determined by the independent Cook Political Report, Trump endorsed a candidate in only five — and they all lost. In the four most competitive Senate races — Arizona, Georgia, Nevada and Pennsylvania — all four of his candidates lost. These swing states and districts are the territory on which the national outcome of US elections depends.

For only the fourth time in a century, the party of the president did not suffer a net midterm loss in the Senate. The midterms were also the most successful for any Democratic president since John F Kennedy in 1962, who had a 62 per cent approval rating, 20 points more than President Biden.

Against a background of record inflation and wide dissatisfaction, the only conclusion is that something went badly wrong with Republican campaign strategy.

Herschel Walker was perhaps Trump's most disastrous protégé.

Trump is the only declared 2024 presidential candidate so far. He will be hard to beat in a primary contest but there is every sign he would lose the election as he did in 2020.

New York mayor losing the rat race

Hugh Tomlinson Washington

The mayor of New York has been fined $300 by his own administration for an infestation of rats at his rental property in Brooklyn.

Eric Adams, who has made stamping out the city's rat problem part of his agenda, attended a virtual court hearing on Tuesday to contest the fine, imposed after city health inspectors found his property in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighbourhood overrun with rodents.

Adams insisted that he was a rat expert. He told the hearing officer, technically his employee, about his efforts in office to beat the pests that have bedevilled the city since its founding and grown worse in the pandemic.

The mayor said that as landlord he had spent $7,000 fighting rats in his property, installing the cutting-edge trap he showcased last year when he was Brooklyn borough president.

The Italian traps lure the rodents into a chamber with a smorgasbord of baits before they fall into a compartment filled with an alcohol-based solution that knocks them out and drowns them. Adams complained that city laws were "designed to penalise homeowners for failing to take steps to prevent and control rodents".

The New York Times reported that he said: "I took those steps and will continue to do so." The health inspectors disagreed. After issuing the fine in May, they noted they had found "fresh rat droppings" at the property. Only days earlier, Adams's administration said it was seeking a "director of rodent migration" — dubbed the rat tsar — to tame the city's infestation problem.

An advertisement for the post says: "Do you have what it takes to do the impossible? A virulent vehemence for vermin? … The drive, determination and killer instinct needed to fight the real enemy — New York City's relentless rat population?"

The problem is legendary but successive administrations have failed. Adams's predecessor, Bill de Blasio, spent tens of millions of dollars trying to combat the rats, including a dry ice programme to suffocate the pests in their burrows. Rat sightings soared during the pandemic, however, as garbage collection was neglected when the sanitation budget was slashed. The mass workforce exodus and unpopular vaccine mandates imposed by de Blasio resulted in hundreds of sanitation staff quitting their jobs. Piles of rubbish grew and the rats thrived.



Rats have been a problem in New York since the populous city was founded

BRESCIA-AMISANO/TEATRO ALLA SCALA/GETTY IMAGES



Theatre of conflict Giorgia Meloni, the Italian prime minister, attended the premiere of Modest Mussorgsky's Boris Godunov at La Scala opera house in Milan. But it was criticised by Ukrainian officials who fear the production, with the Russian bass Ildar Abdrazakov in the title role, could be used as cultural propaganda for Putin's regime

EU diplomat on £200k also takes pension

Jack Parrock Brussels

The European Union's top diplomat is drawing money from a pension fund which is £345 million in debt.

Josep Borrell, 75, is paid £17,260 per month plus benefits as the EU's high representative for foreign affairs (HRVP). He is also receiving payouts from a pension linked to his previous position in the European parliament. "Yes. HRVP is drawing a pension from this voluntary pension fund" a representative for Borrell said.

In a letter to Roberta Metsola, the parliament president, members said there is no "future-fit solution, even though it is known that the voluntary pension fund will be insolvent [soon]".

Borrell, the former Spanish foreign minister, joined the scheme before 2009 which allowed MEPs to pay into a pension for two years before being guaranteed access to the money.

By December 2018, the difference between the net value of the fund and the amount it was required to pay out to people was £246.4 million. That has now increased to £345 million.

Ayatollah's sister calls for an end to 'tyranny' in Iran

Iran

Abbie Cheeseman Beirut

The sister of Iran's supreme leader has said she hopes his "tyranny" will soon be overthrown and has called on the feared Revolutionary Guard to lay down its arms.

"I think it is appropriate now to declare that I oppose my brother's actions and I express my sympathy with all mothers mourning the crimes of the Islamic Republic regime," Badri Hosseini Khamenei said in a letter shared on Twitter by her son Mahmoud Moradkhani, who is based in France.

Support for the regime has never been in the blood: Badri's family have been fierce critics of the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's rule, and that of his predecessor, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, since the 1979 revolution overthrew the shah, long a friend to the West.

Her late husband, Ali Tehrani, was a prominent dissident and cleric whom she followed into exile during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. When the pair returned to Iran in 1995 he was jailed for ten years. He died in October this year, aged 96.

"Our family's opposition and struggle against this criminal system began a few months after the revolution," she wrote. "The crimes of this system, the suppression of any dissenting voice, the imprisonment of the most educated and the most caring youth of this land, the most severe punishments, and the large-scale executions began from the very beginning."

The letter condemned the violent crackdown on the nationwide protests that have rocked Iran for almost three months. "I am sorry that due to physical ailments, I cannot participate in protest movements as I should. But in heart and soul, I am with the people of Iran," it read.

The open letter could be a dangerous move for Badri, who still lives in Iran. Her daughter, Farideh Moradkhani, was arrested last month after calling on foreign governments to cut all ties with Tehran. In a video released on YouTube she denounced her uncle's regime as "murderous and child-killing".

Badri's plea for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to lay down its weapons is unlikely to bear fruit: it called, instead, on the judiciary to "not show mercy to rioters, thugs and terrorists" as it continues its fierce crackdown on the protesters.

Badri accused her brother of not listening to the "voice of the people in Iran" and instead only considering the voices of "mercenaries and money-grubbers". She added: "Ali Khamenei has brought nothing but suffering and oppression."

Rights groups say more than 450 have been killed since the protests began. Five people were sentenced to death by hanging on Tuesday for killing a member of the Basij paramilitary force, bringing the total to 11 after a series of "sham trials" denounced by critics.

Mohammad Khatami, 79, president until 2005, issued a statement in support of the protests, saying that "freedom must not be trampled on in order to maintain security".

Hardline Musk goes to the mattresses

United States

Keiran Southern Los Angeles

Elon Musk has installed queen-sized mattresses in converted Twitter conference rooms so employees can sleep at work, it is understood.

Officials in San Francisco are investigating claims that Musk converted the office space in a possible violation of building regulations.

According to Forbes, employees arriving at the Twitter headquarters on Monday were surprised to find mattresses in the room. "It's not a good look," one said. "It's another unspoken sign of disrespect. There is no discussion. Just like, beds showed up."

There were said to have been "four to eight" beds on each floor. After Musk's $44 billion purchase of Twitter in October he began sacking workers and told remaining staff they would have to commit themselves to a "hardcore" working culture.

Patrick Hannan, the communications director for the San Francisco department of building inspection, said: "We need to make sure the building is used as intended. There are different building code requirements for residential buildings, including those for short-term stays."

Hannan said the department is seeking to conduct an inspection and has contacted the Twitter HQ building manager for more information. Musk criticised the investigation and London Breed, the city's mayor. He tweeted: "So city of SF attacks companies providing beds for tired employees instead of making sure kids are safe from fentanyl. Where are your priorities (London Breed)!?"

Last month Esther Crawford, Twitter's director of product management, was photographed wearing an eye mask while tucked up in a sleeping bag on an office floor.

The world's wealthiest man has repeatedly criticised the working culture he inherited at Twitter and one of his first acts as the new boss was to end the company's work-from-home policy. Twitter had previously told employees that they could work from home "for ever".

TIMES Travel Offers

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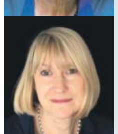
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Lynda La Plante
Lynda La Pante is an internationally best-selling author. Her original script for the much-acclaimed Prime Suspect won awards from BAFTA, Emmy, British Broadcasting and Royal Television Society, as well as the 1993 Edgar Allan Poe Award.



Val McDermid
Val McDermid has sold over 18.5 million books to date across the globe and is translated into more than 40 languages. She is perhaps best-known for her Wire in the Blood series.



Clare Chambers
Clare Chambers' most recent book, Small Pleasures, became a word-of-mouth bestseller and was longlisted for the Women's Prize 2021 and won Page-turner of the year at the British Book Awards 2022.

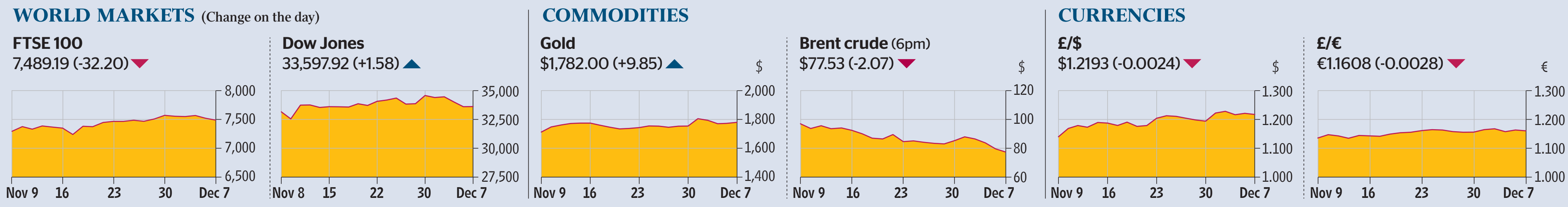
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Business



Investors pull £1bn from UK-focused funds ahead of recession

Patrick Hosking Financial Editor

Investors pulled a net £1.02 billion from UK-focused funds in November, making it the second worst month on record, according to a study.

They are shunning the UK because of fears that the recession may last longer than elsewhere, according to the fund flows data provider Calastone.

In the past 18 months, a net £9.8 billion has been pulled from UK-focused funds and November's outflow has been exceeded only once before, in June 2022, it said.

"Fears over the potential duration of the UK's recession rather than hopes for inflation abating are dominating investor concerns for UK assets," Edward Glyn, head of global markets, said. "Despite low valuations, you can barely give them away at the moment."

Calastone's data is published ahead of comprehensive figures from the Investment Association, which this week reported that net outflows from UK funds in October amounted to £792 million.

The Bank of England and Office for Budget Responsibility believe that the UK entered a recession in the third quarter of 2022 and will come out of it only at the end of next year.

While UK-focused funds were being shunned, investors piled into global bond funds, with a net £1.09 billion invested in November. This was the largest monthly inflow in two years and the fourth highest on record.

Bond yields slumped in the month as investors scented a turning point in the interest rate cycle, with expectations the US Federal Reserve was beginning to curb inflation and so could stop raising rates sooner, or by smaller amounts.

Glyn said optimism fed into a first net inflow into equity funds worldwide for seven months. The trajectory of US rates was a key driver of global markets.

Investor gloom about the UK does not appear to have fed through into share price movements, however. From the low of October 12, the FTSE 100 is up by just over 10 per cent, matching the S&P 500, while the more UK-focused FTSE 250 is up by 14 per cent. The Euro Stoxx 50, which tracks blue-chips in the eurozone, is up by 18 per cent.

Calastone connects fund managers with institutional investors, processing £250 billion of flows each month.

Bulb's tech assets sold to creditor

Sequoia scoops up platform amid £6.5bn collapse

Helen Cahill

The secured creditor of Bulb's parent company has done a deal to secure the energy group's technology platform as taxpayers face losses of £6.5 billion from its collapse.

Sequoia Economic Infrastructure Income Fund, which is listed in London, has carved out Bulb's technology assets from the remnants of its parent company, Simple Energy, after backing its founders with a £55 million loan.

Simple Energy fell into administration alongside Bulb when it collapsed under the pressure of rising energy prices in November last year.

The government was forced to bail out Bulb to secure energy supplies for its 1.7 million customers, and has spent billions in taxpayer money supporting it ahead of a sale to rival Octopus. Simple Energy, however, did not fall into government hands and has instead been propped up by royalties for the technology it provides to Bulb.

Taxpayers have so far spent £21 million in software licence royalties to Simple Energy, which paid a dividend to the Sequoia fund worth £14 million. Administrators have not ruled out repaying Sequoia's debt in full.

The Office for Budget Responsibility said in the autumn statement that taxpayer losses on Bulb could reach £6.5 billion amid a protracted sales process, at a cost of £200 per household. The government's intervention is the largest state rescue since the Royal Bank of Scotland's £45.5 billion bailout during the financial crisis.

The government has said it expects the overall administration to be "fiscally neutral" but it has not outlined the full nature of the deal with Octopus.

Sequoia entered into a loan agreement with Simple Energy in December 2018 when the company was run by Bulb co-founders Hayden Wood and Amit Gudka. Simple Energy's administrators transferred Bulb's technology assets to a new entity, Simple Energy Technology Ltd (SETL), in a deal completed on November 16. The new company will employ 74 software engineers from Bulb's technology division.

Sequoia was granted a call option for £1, giving it the right to buy the shares in SETL at any point until November 19, 2023. The infrastructure fund will pay about £8 million to satisfy an inter-company loan between Simple Energy and SETL if it exercises its call option.

The new entity will be able to raise funding from investors and sign technology deals if Octopus completes its takeover of Bulb and terminates the contact with the parent company. Sequoia could eventually float the venture if it proves successful.

Alan Whitehead, Labour's shadow energy minister, said: "We have absolutely no idea if the terms of the deal are value for money for the taxpayer. The government must share details about the terms of this deal and to what tune the taxpayer is subsidising it."

The takeover of Bulb by Octopus is due to complete this year but will be subject to a judicial review after British Gas, Scottish Power and E.on complained that the terms of the deal had not been fully disclosed.

Sequoia declined to comment.

WILL WINTERCROSS



Back to the jungle Ant and Dec man phones at the Icap Charity Day in the City yesterday. The event raises money for good causes, with revenues and brokers' commissions generated on the day donated to more than 100 charities worldwide

National Grid braces for big chill

Emily Gosden

Electricity prices are forecast to soar in the coming days as cold weather and low wind speeds put Britain's power system to the test.

National Grid, the company tasked with keeping the lights on, yesterday warned of "tighter" margins between supply and demand in the coming week, "particularly for the next few days". It is considering what steps it needs to take to ensure secure supplies, including whether to deploy contingency plans to fire up old coal plants or pay households to use less for the first time.

Temperatures are expected to plunge as low as minus 10C in the coming days as a severe cold snap brings snow and ice to parts of the country. At the same time, wind speeds are forecast to be low; wind farms may generate less than a tenth of their maximum output over the weekend. The spare buffer between supply and demand may be less than "adequate" tomorrow and Sunday, National Grid forecasts suggest.

Tom Edwards of Cornwall Insight, the consultancy, said that power prices in Europe were currently higher than in Britain, so British "prices will rise significantly to reduce exports", with day-ahead prices likely to be above £1,000 per megawatt-hour (MWh).

Such high prices were not seen in 2019 or 2020 and for a total of 22 hours in 2021 and four hours so far this year, he said. Prices for the teatime peak tonight were already more than £500/MWh. Average power prices in the decade before the energy crisis were about £50/MWh.

Jean-Paul Harreman of EnAppSys, another consultancy, said: "With colder weather looming and a *Dunkelflaute* on Monday [a cold and gloomy day without wind or solar], the market is looking very tightly supplied in Britain. We will need all conventional generation to be online, including coal. Even then, it's likely that Britain will still need imports from mainland Europe. If the temperature forecasts are accurate … France will start competing for power with the British market."

Separately, the CBI today calls on the government to extend energy bill relief for businesses with high usage to beyond March. It said companies needed clarity this year to enable them to plan.

Need to know

1 The secured creditor of Bulb's parent company has done a deal to snap up the energy group's technology platform. Sequoia Economic Infrastructure Income Fund has carved out Bulb's technology assets from parent company Simple Energy after backing its founders with a £55 million loan. Page 41

2 Investors pulled a net £1.02 billion from UK-focused funds in November, making it the second worst month on record. Investors are shunning the UK over fears the recession may last longer than elsewhere, according to fund flows data provider Calastone. Page 41

3 Electricity prices are forecast to soar as cold weather and low wind speeds put Britain's power system to the test. National Grid warned of "tighter" margins between supply and demand in the coming week, "particularly for the next few days". Page 41

4 House prices have fallen and rents have risen as buyer interest declined for a seventh consecutive month. Demand fell in November, though slower than in the month before, according to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

5 Ramesh "Sunny" Balwani, the former president of Theranos under founder and girlfriend Elizabeth Holmes, has been sentenced to 155 months, or nearly 13 years, in prison for defrauding investors and patients before the blood-testing group's collapse.

6 Labour shortages and economic uncertainty cast a shadow over recruitment in November, with the number of permanent hires down for a second consecutive month. Growth in job vacancies, which reached a record high this year, fell to its lowest level in nearly two years. Page 44

7 Shares in Moonpig fell after the online card and gift group cut its revenue forecast as the cost of living crisis and Royal Mail strikes deterred consumers. It said revenue for the year would be about £320 million, down from its previous forecast of £350 million. Page 46

8 Billions of pounds were added to the value of drug companies including GSK after shares rallied strongly on signs that Zantac litigation in the US could collapse. About 50,000 cases claiming the heartburn drug caused cancer were dismissed in a federal court in Florida. Page 47

9 A shortage of vans because of supply chain problems and increased demand from large organisations have boosted revenues at Redde Northgate. The van hire group is raising its dividend and told analysts to lift their profit forecasts. Page 48

10 Topps Tiles is under pressure to sack Darren Shapland, its chairman, after it refused to buy almost a third of its tiles from a supplier that has built a 29.9 per cent stake in the business. Topps Tiles said that it would not buy more tiles from MS Galleon's company, Cersanit. Page 49

Gift that stopped giving: Monks gets out of tech stocks

Monks Investment Trust has carried out a "ruthless weeding" of its portfolio of technology-driven holdings after reporting that it had underperformed its benchmark by 5 per cent in the latest six-month period (Patrick Hosking writes).

Monks, a FTSE 250 firm with £2.6 billion of investments, has dumped a number of disastrous share picks including Carvana, the American used car retailer, and Peloton, the company behind the lockdown exercise bike craze.

Monks reported a 5.2 per cent slide in net assets in the six months to October, compared with a fall of only 0.3 per cent in the yardstick it attempts to beat: the sterling-based FTSE World index.

The result was "disappointing", it said.

A popular share with investors seeking exposure to higher-growth companies around the world, Monks said it had sold 20 holdings so far this year "in a proactive and ruthless portfolio-weeding exercise".

It has also cut back its exposure to Chinese companies, citing the change of regulatory tone from Beijing, which Monks said would make it difficult for private enterprises in the country to generate above-normal profits in future.

Monks is managed by Edinburgh-based Baillie Gifford. The asset manager has carved out a strong reputation for picking ambitious, disruptive stocks, but its performance record has been badly hit by the technology sell-off of the past year.

Monks criticised the management of some of its former investments, saying: "In Peloton's case, it became clear that the company had mismanaged the



House prices squeezed by fall-off in buyer demand

Arthi Nachiappan
Economics Correspondent

House prices have fallen and rents have risen as homebuyer interest declined for a seventh consecutive month, a survey has found.

Demand among buyers continued to fall in November, though at a slower pace than in the month before, according to the monthly survey by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

The net balance for new buyer inquiries — which calculates whether surveyors recorded a rise or fall in activity, and to what extent — came in at -38 per cent on the RICS index. The index runs from -100 per cent to 100 per cent, with a negative figure reflecting a downward trend.

The figure is better than the revised -53 per cent reported in October, but indicates that demand for buying a home remains weak. This has already filtered through into property transactions, with the number of agreed sales at a net balance of -35 per cent in the latest survey. The figure is an improvement on the -45 per cent recorded in October but marks the second consecutive month in which agreed sales fell across all regions of the UK.

The number of landlord instructions in the lettings market has also continued to decline, putting further pressure on dwindling supply within the rental sector in the light of rising mortgage rates. The net balance remained in negative territory at -27 per cent in November. However, the average number of homes to rent rose slightly from an average of 34 properties per estate agent to 35.

The mismatch between rental supply and demand is expected to push up the cost of renting in the coming months. Tenant demand continues to rise, boosted by the number of would-be buyers delaying house purchases. Inquiries from prospective renters remained positive, with a net balance of +35 per cent in the latest survey.

The housing market has turned in the past few months as buyers delay big purchases due to a combination of rising mortgage rates, the soaring cost of living and forecasts that the economy will enter a recession.

The number of mortgages approved to finance house purchases dropped by 10.6 per cent in October to 58,977, the latest Bank of England figures show. The number of mortgage approvals was 15.1 per cent lower than in the same month in 2021.

However, according to HM Revenue & Customs, the number of completed sales rose in the same month to 108,480, up 2.3 per cent from September's figure.

House prices, which grew at a record pace over the pandemic, have dropped slightly recently and are expected to fall further next year. Given the surge in prices over the past few years, the decline has been cast by some analysts as more of a "correction" than a collapse.

Simon Rubinsohn, chief economist at RICS, said the "downbeat" nature of the latest survey reflected "the uncertain [macroeconomic] environment and the higher cost of mortgage finance". But he added: "Although [there have been] two consecutive modest monthly falls in prices, and the forward-looking series indicates that this trend will extend through the coming months, the likely 'job-rich' recession suggests the downturn in the housing market this time could be shallower compared with past experiences."

Biggest fall in prices since 2008

House prices have recorded their biggest monthly drop since the financial crisis as rising borrowing costs deterred prospective buyers and prompted a market slowdown.

The average price of a UK property fell 2.3 per cent in November, marking the third straight month of decline and the biggest drop since October 2008, according to the latest index from Halifax, Britain's biggest mortgage lender.

The typical home cost £285,579 last month, down from £292,406 in October, as economic uncertainty and the rising cost of living continued to eat into consumer appetite for big purchases.

House prices are still 4.7 per cent higher than they were in November last year, but the annual rate of growth has slowed significantly from the 8.2 per cent recorded in the previous month.

Property prices have increased by nearly a fifth since before the pandemic as wealthier households built up savings, sought homes with more space and brought forward purchases to make the most of the stamp duty tax break that ended in September last year.

Kim Kinnaird, director at Halifax Mortgages, said: "While a market slowdown was expected given the known economic headwinds, and following such extensive house price inflation over the last few years [a rise of 19 per cent since March 2020], this month's fall reflects the worst of the market volatility over recent months."

Some prospective buyers had paused their decision to move due to "increased pressure on affordability", with industry data suggesting that both buyers and sellers were "taking stock while the market continues to stabilise", she added.







ALAMY

The used car retailer Carvana, Peloton and remote doctor service Teladoc have been "weeded" by the investment trust

hardware side of its business, significantly overestimating demand for its exercise bikes." Peloton shares are down 64 per cent in the year to date.

Carvana had been hit by rising interest rates and its "probability of success" was narrowing, Monks said. A year ago, it hailed the company as redefining the car-buying process. "We are optimistic that Carvana is well placed to disrupt industry incumbents," it said last December.

Carvana's shares have fallen 97 per cent this year and dipped again yesterday on reports that its creditors had signed a pact to act jointly in any restructuring. Monks, which had a Carvana holding valued at £16 million last December, did not say when it sold.

Known for its multi-storey car-vending machines, Carvana boomed to become the second largest online used car retailer in the US by 2020. Lockdown boosted demand still further, but the shares have since cratered on the back of the company's high debts and concerns over its safety inspection record.

Another investment turkey for Monks has been Teladoc, the US-listed remote doctor service. "A combination of slowing growth and significant write-downs relating to an acquisition undermined our confidence in the long-term investment case," Monks said. Teladoc shares have fallen by 69 per cent this year.

The under-performance comes at an awkward time for Monks, which is in the throes of absorbing a rival, the £173 million Independent Investment Trust, following the retirement of its well regarded manager Max Ward.

Since the present team of Baillie Gifford managers took over the management of the portfolio in March 2015, the company has produced a net asset value total return of 118.4 per cent, just trailing the 119.7 per cent of its benchmark.

The shares closed down 6¾p, or 0.7 per cent, at 978¼p.

Tempus, page 50

Theranos boss is jailed for 13 years

Callum Jones
US Business Correspondent
San Francisco

The former president of Theranos was sentenced to 155 months, or nearly 13 years, in prison last night for defrauding investors and patients before the blood-testing group's collapse.

Ramesh "Sunny" Balwani, who was the second-most senior executive at the once-fêted Silicon Valley start-up, faces a longer jail term than Elizabeth Holmes, its founder and his former girlfriend. Bulwani was ordered to surrender to prison custody on March 15.

Holmes, 38, was last month sentenced to 135 months, or more than 11 years, in prison for defrauding investors. Balwani served as her top deputy.

Theranos, founded in 2003, promised to revolutionise healthcare with technology it said required a few drops of blood to conduct hundreds of medical tests. Investors ploughed hundreds of millions of dollars into the company, valued at $9 billion at its peak.

It closed in 2018 following questions over the capability of its technology, reality of its operations and reliability of its test results, first raised by an investigation by The Wall Street Journal.

The company's proprietary devices could only handle a fraction of the tests that they were said to, commercial machines were in widespread use despite denials and some practitioners became alarmed over the accuracy of results.

Balwani, 57, was chief operating officer of Theranos. He was convicted in July on two charges of conspiracy and ten of fraud after a trial in San Jose, California. In January, after a separate trial, Holmes was convicted on three counts of fraud and one count of conspiracy.

Holmes was the public face of Theranos during its rapid ascent, but prosecutors said Balwani played a central role behind the scenes. The pair were in a romantic relationship for much of his tenure at the company, although most employees, investors and board members were unaware at the time.

Balwani denied the charges. In a bid for leniency ahead of his sentencing, his defence team submitted dozens of letters of support from family members, supporters and former colleagues.

Prosecutors pointed to text messages Balwani sent to Holmes, which they said underlined his pivotal role. "I am responsible for everything at Theranos," he wrote in July 2015.

Three banned over bond market fraud

Russell Hotten

Three former Mizuho International bond traders have received fines and bans from the Financial Conduct Authority for "market manipulation" six years ago.

Diego Urra was fined £395,000, and Jorge López González and Poojan Sheth £100,000 each. They were banned from "performing any functions in relation to regulated activity", the FCA said. All three have appealed and the FCA said the penalties would not be enforced pending a hearing.

The regulator said their strategy was to send "false" signals into the markets about the buying and selling of Italian government bond futures, and then profit from changes in the price. The men are said to have placed "large misleading" orders for bonds they never intended to execute and which were quickly cancelled. Instead, the traders placed smaller orders on the opposite side of the book that they did intend to execute, the FCA said.

Urra had worked in the financial services industry for 18 years and had more than 15 years' experience of trading European government bonds (EGBs). He ran Mizuho's EGB desk, while López González was a director and Sheth an associate. Their conduct "constituted deliberate, intentional and repeated market manipulation," the FCA said.

The fines and bans reflect the "serious nature of the breaches" and should act as a deterrent to other market participants, the FCA added.

The men have referred the decision to an independent tribunal, where a judge will hear the cases of all sides.

Metro Bank is close to settling an investigation by the FCA into a disastrous accounting blunder in 2019 and has increased the provision it has made for a fine to £10 million from £5.3 million. The lender said the closure of the regulator's inquiry "will represent an important milestone for the company". It was fined £5.4 million by the Bank of England's Prudential Regulation Authority for the debacle a year ago.

Appliance of science is tonic for GSK



BUSINESS COMMENTARY *Alistair Osborne*

At last a treatment for investor heartburn. Not Zantac but Judge Robin Rosenberg. Her 341-page ruling has brought some science to the big question hanging over the share prices of GSK and its spun-off sibling Haleon: how much they'd have to cough up to settle lawsuits over the blockbuster drug.

Short answer: a lot less than the market feared and possibly nothing at all, bar legal costs. Since the drug group's split from its consumer health wing in July, the market has been focused on one thing: the outcome of a multi-district claim in Florida, brought by tens of thousands of plaintiffs claiming that Zantac caused cancer. Their case? That its active ingredient, ranitidine, degraded over time to form a chemical called NDMA — one the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) identified as a "probable human carcinogen" (report, page 47).

Zantac was withdrawn from sale and lawsuits piled up, with Morgan Stanley analysts putting the potential hit to the pharma industry at $10 billion to $45 billion — a wide range, maybe, but enough to freak out investors. And who cared if Zantac had been through myriad owners — also including Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, Boehringer Ingelheim and Sanofi — and sold as a prescription and over-the-counter drug? Since the demerger, GSK had lost about £14 billion of market value, with Haleon down £5 billion more, even if it had recovered a little recently.

The selling looked overdone, as noted here last month, not least with both companies performing well. The proof of that? The latest from Rosenberg. The Florida case had already seen claims over ten different types of cancer cut to five: bladder, oesophageal, gastric, liver and pancreatic. But investors were waiting for the judge's view on what evidence would count as admissible. Analysts were expecting something nuanced. Instead she delivered "the absolute demolition of the plaintiff case", as Redburn analysts put it.

She noted that the lawsuits "relied heavily" on the science of a private outfit, Valisure. It had tested batches of ranitidine and found "lots" of NDMA — in excess of 3,000,000 nanograms. Or miles above the FDA's safe limits of 96ng for any drug, the amount typically found in grilled or smoked meats. But, to get there, it had heated up ranitidine to 266 degrees fahrenheit, well above the 98 degrees of the human body.

In another test, it had mixed it with salt, also detecting NDMA way above FDA limits. This time, though, the amount of salt used was "so great that it was close to the level where, upon consumption, the salt intake would cause death".

In short, this was bad science, with Rosenberg finding that "there is no scientist outside this litigation who concluded that ranitidine causes cancer". The upshot? She threw out the case, sending GSK shares up 7.5 per cent to £14.92 and Haleon's 3.6 per cent higher to 305.7p. Yes, the plaintiffs will appeal and the pharma industry still faces Zantac lawsuits in individual US states — notably in Delaware and California — even if Redburn is right that it's "inconceivable" that an effective federal ruling from Florida "would have no evidentiary value". And GSK and Haleon's shares still lag their £17.36 and 330p, respectively, of demerger day. But, finally, some proper science is being brought to their market values.

A Reit carry-on

What a place for a weekend break: the Hove Seaside Getaway Apartments, just along from Brighton beach and offering "water sports facilities". Who owns this place, available for reservations on Booking.com? Home Reit, the investment trust with a strategy to "exclusively tackle homelessness" (report, page 49).

The tenants of its 2,400 properties are meant to be charities for the homeless, signed up to 25-year leases and qualifying for exempt housing benefit, in effect underwritten by the government. So, how do you square that with them being advertised on holiday websites — at least until recently? Home Reit says its Hove pad, with units featuring flat-screen TVs, can no longer be rented on Booking.com.

It's just one discovery of litigation firm Harcus Parker, which also says it has found Home Reit abodes on Zoopla and SpareRoom. It is now pursuing "a case to seek redress for shareholders", who have lost half their money since October 2020's float. Harcus claims Home Reit, which has raised £850 million since the listing, "used investors' money in a way which runs contrary" to what they "were told".

Yes, Harcus could look like an ambulance-chasing lawyer, piggybacking on the earlier work of short-seller Viceroy Research, which also flushed out copycat stuff from Boatman Capital to which the trust hasn't responded. Yet, Harcus has been on the case since July, when Circle Housing proved how flaky some Home Reit tenants were by crashing into administration. It also claims Home Reit has overpaid for six property portfolios by an average 99.4 per cent and made "substantial payments" to intermediaries.

Shares in Home Reit, which says it is reviewing Harcus's claims, fell 2 per cent to 50.1p — a mile from its net asset value of 111.2p. And having failed with a 13,000-word rebuttal of Viceroy's claims, the trust has yet to produce its delayed full-year figures. An independent inquiry is Home Reit's only chance of persuading investors that it's no house of cards.

Taylor made?

Sing along now. No wonder FTX's Sam Bankman-Fried was so keen to sign up Taylor Swift (report, page 51). What could it have been about her ditties that made her so ideal for a $100 million sponsorship deal? Was it *I Did Something Bad*? Or *I Knew You Were Trouble*? Or *Don't Blame Me*? Such a shame her SBF compilation album will probably never happen.

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Business

Brent crude dives after rise in stocks and worries of falling demand

Emily Gosden

Oil prices fell to lows not seen since January yesterday on continued fears of weaker demand, as North Sea executives push for the UK windfall tax to be eased if lower prices persist.

Brent crude, the global benchmark price, was trading down about 1.7 per cent at $78 a barrel last night after American government data showed an unexpectedly large build in fuel stocks.

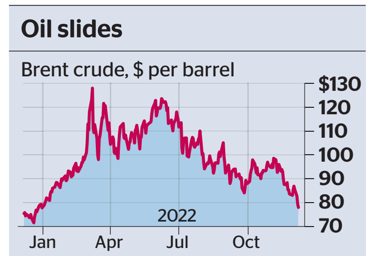
The US Energy Information Administration said that distillate stocks rose by 6.2 million barrels, far exceeding estimates of a 2.2 million barrel rise. Inventories of gasoline increased by 5.3 million barrels, compared with a forecast increase of 2.7 million barrels.

Brent crude has settled below $80 a barrel only twice previously this year: on Tuesday and on January 3, according to Refinitiv. A sell-off in recent months has been driven by fears of a macroeconomic slump weakening demand for oil.

Prices have lost all the gains made in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, when Brent briefly spiked to more than $130 a barrel on fears that millions of barrels a day of Russian exports could be lost from the market.

The UK government imposed a windfall tax on North Sea oil and gas producers in May to fund help for consumers struggling with soaring bills, and last month increased the rate of the tax. Producers are due to meet the chancellor tomorrow and are expected to reiterate calls for the tax to cease to apply when oil prices fall below a certain level.

TotalEnergies, of France, has said it is cutting its investment in the UK North Sea by a quarter, or £100 million, next year in response to the increased levy.



'Foreign workers snub UK for quality of life'

Britain is falling behind in labour competitiveness as it fails to develop homegrown talent and becomes less attractive as a destination for overseas workers, according to a survey (Emma Taggart writes).

In the Institute for Management Development (IMD)'s world talent ranking the UK slipped seven places, falling to 28th out of 63 countries. The decline of the perception of the UK among the international labour market comes amid mounting concerns about the country's economic situation and education system.

The survey of more than 5,000 executives from 63 countries showed that the UK was no longer being seen as a particularly favourable destination for international professionals, ranking behind countries such as Latvia, Cyprus, Estonia and Slovenia.

Professor Arturo Bris, director of the IMD world competitiveness centre, said that the UK was avoided by overseas workers "due to concerns about the quality of life in the country, fed by political fragmentation and economic problems, brought on in part by Brexit".

Mounting worries regarding the declining quality of life in Britain contributed to the nation's waning attractiveness to overseas workers. The UK was ranked as only 35th out of the 63 economies for quality of life, and according to the survey it was perceived to be lower than Slovenia and China.

This, combined with the nation's rising cost of living, which was higher in only nine countries, is attributed to fuelling the UK's decline in labour competitiveness, according to the IMD.


ALAMY

Wish you were here? Cyprus is proving a more favoured destination for international professionals than "fragmented" Britain

Bris highlighted concerns about the declining prestige of the UK's education system, which has fallen behind countries such as Luxembourg and the Czech Republic. "This is a concerning situation for the UK with no quick fix," he said. The nation's primary and secondary education was ranked 28th out of the 63 countries surveyed, contributing to its overall fall in international labour market competitiveness.

There are concerns that the lack of economic and political stability in the UK in recent months has impacted the country's attractiveness to the international business community.

Worries about the UK's ability to develop and retain its workforce are underlined by the survey results, which revealed that the country's inability to hold on to its workforces was making it less competitive globally. The deteriorating economic situation and education system were also found to be fuelling the decline in international labour market competitiveness.

Northern European countries were found to be among those deemed most attractive to the international labour market, with Switzerland claiming the top spot for the sixth consecutive year, closely followed by Sweden and Iceland.

The slump in the UK's attractiveness to international talent follows worries that the country is losing out on professional staff to its European neighbours.

"Until the UK is able to deal with the turmoil in its politics and markets which has dominated recent years and take action to revamp its domestic situation, it will be unable to attract or retain the talent that it needs to restart growth and drive innovation," Bris said.

Job vacancies slow amid fears of prolonged slump

Arthi Nachiappan
Economics Correspondent

Labour shortages and economic uncertainty cast a shadow over recruitment in November, with the number of permanent hires down for a second consecutive month.

Growth in job vacancies, which reached a record high this year, fell to its lowest level in nearly two years last month as companies scaled back recruitment amid fears the economy is heading towards a prolonged downturn brought on by the cost of living crisis.

In a sign that competition for workers is cooling, the rate of inflation in wages for new starters as well as temporary employees fell to its lowest level in a year and a half despite inflation in double digits, according to the latest recruiter survey by KPMG and the Recruitment and Employment Confederation.

Inflation, as measured by the consumer prices index, hit 11.1 per cent in October, the highest in more than 40 years.

The availability of workers continued to fall in November as fewer foreign workers, a shrinking workforce and greater hesitancy among employees to leave their jobs for new ones all dragged down the number of candidates applying for roles. However, the latest fall was the weakest recorded in just over a year and a half as the rate of decline in the number of people available to work begins to slow.

There was fierce competition for staff earlier this year after hundreds of thousands left the workforce over the pandemic, mainly due to long-term illness. In the spring the number of vacancies exceeded the number of unemployed people for the first time on record.

Unemployment is close to a historic low at 3.6 per cent but the employment rate remains 1.1 per cent below pre-pandemic levels, according to the latest Office for National Statistics figures. More than a fifth of the working-age population is considered "economically inactive", which means they are neither working nor looking for work owing to illness, caring responsibilities or education among other reasons.

Neil Carberry, chief executive of the confederation, said the latest results did not indicate that there had been a major slowdown in hiring. "While permanent recruitment activity has dropped from the very high levels of earlier in the year, the pace of that drop has tempered this month," he said.

Temporary hires have risen as companies seek to fill positions in retail and healthcare for the busy Christmas season, but firms may maintain a higher share of temporary workers over the next year, Carberry added.

"A flatter period in the labour market is inevitable … but demand is being supported by some major underlying factors, including labour shortages and technological change," he said. "The main way to boost performance is to unlock growth by businesses putting their people planning first, as a strategic way to enhance productivity."

Claire Warnes, partner for skills and productivity at KPMG UK, warned that wage growth may fall in the coming months as employers cut back on plans to recruit new workers and employees stay put to maintain their job security.

China rolls back Covid curbs as trade suffers

Martin Strydom

China's exports and imports shrank at a faster than expected pace last month as domestic and foreign demand fell sharply.

Exports contracted 8.7 per cent in November from a year earlier, down from a 0.3 per cent decline in October and well below analysts' expectations for a 3.5 per cent fall, official data showed.

It was the worst performance since February 2020, when China became the first country to go into lockdown to curb the spread of Covid-19.

New restrictions in many Chinese cities, including the manufacturing hubs Zhengzhou and Guangzhou as infections spiked, disrupted production last month. Foxconn, the biggest supplier of Apple iPhones from its Zhengzhou factory, reported a big drop in revenue last month after Covid controls hit production and led to protests by workers.

The slowdown in production, plus a slump in the country's property market, has weighed on growth in the world's second-largest economy. China's economy grew by 3 per cent in the first three quarters of this year, well below the annual target of about 5.5 per cent. Full-year growth is forecast to be just over 3 per cent.

The Covid restrictions also hit imports, which dropped by 10.6 per cent from a 0.7 per cent fall in October. This was weaker than forecasts of a 6 per cent decline. The downturn in imports was the worst since May 2020.

Economists at Pantheon Macroeconomics said: "Global consumer demand is weakening in the face of elevated inflation and high interest rates, and consumers are switching spending away from work-at-home gadgets and furniture — often imported from China — towards food, energy and consumer services, imported from elsewhere."

A surge in fuel and food prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine has pushed up inflation around the world. Attempts by central banks to bring prices down by raising interest rates is causing global growth to slow. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have said higher rates could push the world economy into recession.

In an attempt to bolster China's economy and ease frustrations at three years of zero-Covid policies, Beijing yesterday announced a significant relaxation in pandemic rules.

Simon Nixon



Russia's apparent resilience is being kept up by policy tricks and cash

From the start, the war in Ukraine has been fought not just on the battlefield but on the economic front too. It is easy to look at this part of the conflict and conclude that it has not proceeded as well as many in the West expected. An unprecedented package of sanctions, including the freezing of half of Russia's central bank reserves, failed to deter President Putin from invading Ukraine, nor has it prevented Russia from continuing to prosecute the war. Instead, Russia has sometimes appeared to be winning the economic conflict. By restricting gas supplies to Europe, it triggered an inflation crisis that has severely hit living standards and shows some success in weakening public support for aiding Ukraine.

Doubts about the West's willingness to take the economic fight to Putin arose again this week with the announcement of a new G7-led price cap on exports of Russian oil. After months of wrangling, the price cap was set at $60 a barrel, roughly in line with current market prices. Hawkish countries such as Poland and the Baltic states had been arguing for a much lower price cap of around $30 a barrel, well below Russia's cost of production. That would have starved Russia of the huge profits it continues to make on its oil exports, which have been vital to maintaining the value of the ruble and its wider war effort. But they failed to convince allies such as America, Germany and France that a low price cap would not lead to oil shortages and soaring prices, deepening the West's economic crisis.

Nonetheless, this hand-wringing about western sanctions is misplaced. When one looks beyond Russian official data, which is in any case heavily censored, it is clear that the cumulative effect of sanctions is having a dire effect on Russian living standards as well as hampering efforts to supply its military machine. That is undermining public support in Russia for the war, as a recent leaked Kremlin poll confirmed. What's more, the simple fact that the West was able to agree on the oil price cap, despite significant repercussions for key sectors including shipping and insurance in countries such as Greece, Cyprus and Malta, sends a powerful signal to Moscow of the West's continued unity and resolve.



Elvira Nabiullina, Russia's central bank governor

It's true that official data appears to show the Russian economy has been resilient. The ruble, for example, plunged in value in the early days of the war but has since rallied to become the world's best performing currency this year. According to official data, the economy contracted by just 0.4 per cent in the first half of the year compared with the previous year and is likely to shrink by less than 3 per cent in the whole of 2022, while inflation is running at around 13 per cent. The government's budget was in surplus until the end of September.

But a recent report by Vladimir Milov for the Wilfried Martens Centre, a Brussels-based think tank, suggests that this illusion of resilience is only being maintained by a combination of policy tricks and the rapid depletion of Russia's financial reserves.The ruble's apparent strength, for example, partly reflects the large current account surpluses that Russia has been able to accumulate through sales of oil and gas at war-inflated prices. But the current account surplus also reflects the effect of exchange controls imposed by central bank governor Elvira Nabiullina, which, combined with the impact of sanctions, has led to an estimated 70 per cent collapse in imports. The effect has been to help prop up Russia's currency.

In fact, the evidence suggests that many sectors are being hit hard by sanctions. Gas exports had collapsed by 40 per cent by the third quarter of the year. Coal exports are down by 9 per cent. Automobile sector output was down by a remarkable 77.4 per cent in September, due to shortages of components. Ironically, the strong ruble has added to the difficulties faced by exporters in non-energy sectors such as manufactured goods, chemicals, food and steel, as it has undermined their competitiveness.

Meanwhile the domestic economy has been hit hard by a collapse in the workforce as millions have either fled or been drafted. Official figures show the workforce shrank by 600,000 in October alone, most likely some of the most qualified. That creates a long-term hit both to the demand and supply side of the economy. Retail sales have slumped by 10 per cent, which suggests a far deeper economic contraction than official data claims. So far, the official data shows that unemployment remains remarkably low at just 4 per cent, but this too may be a mirage: even at the end of the second quarter, 13 per cent of the workforce, some 4.3 million people, were subject to part-time, downtime and unpaid leave.

All this is part of what Milov calls the "Potemkin" picture of the economy that Putin has constructed to convince the world that Russia is coping with sanctions. But how long can he keep up the façade? The longer the sanctions are in place, the greater the damage. Many of the measures included adjustment periods so are only fully taking effect now. Moscow is already having to use unfrozen liquid reserves to finance a budget deficit of 0.9 per cent of GDP this year. Those reserves will be depleted quickly as the pressure on the budget grows next year as a result of a shrinking economy and increased military spending. That will make it harder to sustain the strength of the ruble, raising the spectre of much higher inflation.

The reality is that Russia is losing the economic war, just as it is losing the war on the battlefield. Real incomes in Russia are already estimated to be 10 per cent lower today than in 2014, when Putin first invaded Ukraine. Nor does he have any good options to reorient the Russian economy to make up for lost western trade. The West needs to keep piling on the pressure, not least by pressing third countries not to help Moscow circumvent sanctions. Putin thought Europeans would buckle in the face of Russian economic pressure this winter. Instead, their gas storage is full and they have just implemented a Russian oil embargo and price cap. On this, as on so much else, he miscalculated.

James Dyson

UK's competitiveness is turning to dust under flexible working diktat

The government talks loftily of the UK being a "science and technology superpower" while doing everything it can to achieve the exact opposite. Giving employees the right to ask to work from home from day one of a new job is the latest example of Big Government interference in how companies are run. It will jeopardise the vital in-person collaboration and momentum they need to innovate and succeed, and hamper employers' ability to organise their workforce as they judge fit in a competitive world.

High-growth, ambitious companies will have to think seriously before they invest in the UK. Why would Dyson, for example, continue to invest hundreds of millions of pounds here every year on research and development when we will have little control over how and where our 3,500 UK staff work? The government's misguided approach will generate friction between employers and employees, creating further bureaucratic drag. Factory workers, bus drivers and retail staff cannot work from home — so the government is deepening the divide, creating a highly invidious two-tier workforce.

'The government is creating an invidious two-tier workforce'

Kevin Hollinrake, small business minister, said the announcement was a "no-brainer" that would allow a better work-life balance.

This is disingenuous. Working from home has superficial attractions for individuals in the short term. But employers, who are charged with being competitive and developing their workforce, know the huge damage it does to companies and employees alike. If they can't remain competitive, they will fail and jobs will go to other, more ambitious economies. It is telling that only 7 per cent of those involved in the recent consultation conducted by the government were employers.

A ministers-know-best approach is disastrous for our prospects. It is ironic that when commuting data is showing that people have worked out the debilitating impact of working from home, the government chooses this moment to climb aboard a bandwagon heading in the opposite direction. This is pure populism.

The fact the so-called consultation was called "Making flexible working the default" demonstrates that the exercise was a foregone conclusion, no doubt aided by the many civil servants who enjoy working from home, despite the shockingly bad public service they often provide and their terrible track record of delivery. Businesses must already jump through hoops to prove that a basis for refusing a request for flexible working falls within one of eight reasons. The process alone of tackling each request is time-consuming and costly. There is no reason to complicate the law further: businesses for whom working from home is suitable can offer it now if they wish.

We have seen from our own experience at Dyson during periods of government-enforced working from home how deeply inefficient it is. It prevents the collaboration and in-person training that we need to develop new technology and maintain competitiveness against global rivals. This is what makes us succeed. In other countries where Dyson operates we are given the freedom to organise how — and where — our staff carry out the roles they are contracted to. In no other country have we experienced such overreach in terms of the government telling us how to organise our business. To impose this policy during what is likely to be one of the worst recessions on record is economically illiterate and staggeringly self-defeating. The UK increasingly looks like a lackadaisical global outlier that is determined to interfere in business and drive away investment.

The theme of the chancellor's autumn statement last month was "difficult decisions". This week's announcement is more about short-term popularity than improving economic performance. The government should survey the international horizon.

Britain is losing the race, becoming less competitive, and this policy will make us fall even further behind.

Sir James Dyson is Dyson's founder and chief engineer

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GUY SMALLMAN/GETTY IMAGES



The Communication Workers Union has planned additional strikes timed to disrupt the Christmas postal period

Bad news in the post for Moonpig over mail strikes

Katie Prescott

Investors in Moonpig headed for the exit yesterday after the online card and gift group cut its revenue forecast for the year as the cost of living crisis and Royal Mail strikes deterred consumers.

In its half-year results, the FTSE 250 group said revenue for the year would be about £320 million, down from its previous forecast of £350 million, because of challenging trading conditions and "the continued macroeconomic uncertainty".

Postal strikes and an unflattering comparison to the surge in sales during Covid-19 lockdowns meant revenues, excluding the experience part of the business, such as hot air balloon rides, fell 8 per cent to £131 million from £142 million in the six months to the end of October.

However, Nickyl Raithatha, chief executive, remained upbeat about the outlook. "We are a high-margin, cash-generative business with a large opportunity in front of us and a clear market leadership position," he said. "Once the external environment stabilises we absolutely expect to resume our long-term growth trajectory."

A reliable Royal Mail service is crucial for the business, which sells cards for special occasions. The Communication Workers Union has scheduled strike action over the past few months, with more planned during the Christmas period on December 9, 11, 14 and 15. Eight of these fell in the period covered by Moonpig's half-year results.

Moonpig was founded more than 20 years ago by Nick Jenkins amid the fallout of the dotcom crash and traded successfully through the financial crisis. A former commodity trader, he named his company after his loathed school nickname. It was floated last year at a price of 350p with a £1.2 billion valuation in February by Exponent, which had owned it since 2016. The shares closed down 13½p, or 8.9 per cent, at 137¾p yesterday.

The number of orders from the card and gift businesses, Moonpig and Greetz, based in the Netherlands, dropped by 13 per cent to 16.9 million from 19.5 million. Despite the fall, the company restated its profit target for the full year of between £85 million and £88 million because of the size of its profit margin. Its strategy to navigate the uncertain economic outlook is focusing on the higher-margin cards business and offering a cheaper range of gifts to customers.

Moonpig's pre-tax profits halved in the first six months to £9.1 million from £18.7 million in the same period last year, partly driven by increased interest payments on its purchase of Red Letter Days and Buyagift in July as it expanded into the gift and experiences market.

David Reynolds, analyst at Davy Research, said: "UK-centric business models are caught in the downdraft of a recession and what that does for consumer sentiment, the rising cost of living and their ability to spend." He said the share price fall came as investors were spooked by the company's rapid change to its revenue target, which it restated only in September.



In a note, analysts at Peel Hunt said: "The reasons for the downgrade are out of Moonpig's hands and one-off in nature."

Raithatha insisted that the online greeting card business was still at an early stage. "The long-term trend shows that clearly the market continues to move online and the numbers are still low — we think it is about 16 per cent penetration in the UK," he said.

Tempus, page 50

Nickyl Raithatha said that the e-card sector remained at an early stage

Mitchells & Butlers back to black as drinkers return

Dominic Walsh

The owner of the Toby Carvery and All Bar One brands shrugged off the "highly challenging" trading environment as it swung back into the black for the full year and reported strong recent sales.

Mitchells & Butlers, which also owns Harvester and Vintage Inns, said the easing of Covid-19 restrictions this Christmas and a "mildly beneficial" World Cup had combined to positive effect, while price rises had partially offset problems caused by inflation.

Phil Urban, the chief executive, said: "A year ago it was the food-led businesses in suburbia that were doing well, but over the past year we've seen a return to city centres and the older customer coming back to their locals."

He said the group's food-led businesses were "doing OK" but they were suffering by comparison with the same period last year, when they had VAT of only 12.5 per cent on food. The rate has been restored to 20 per cent.

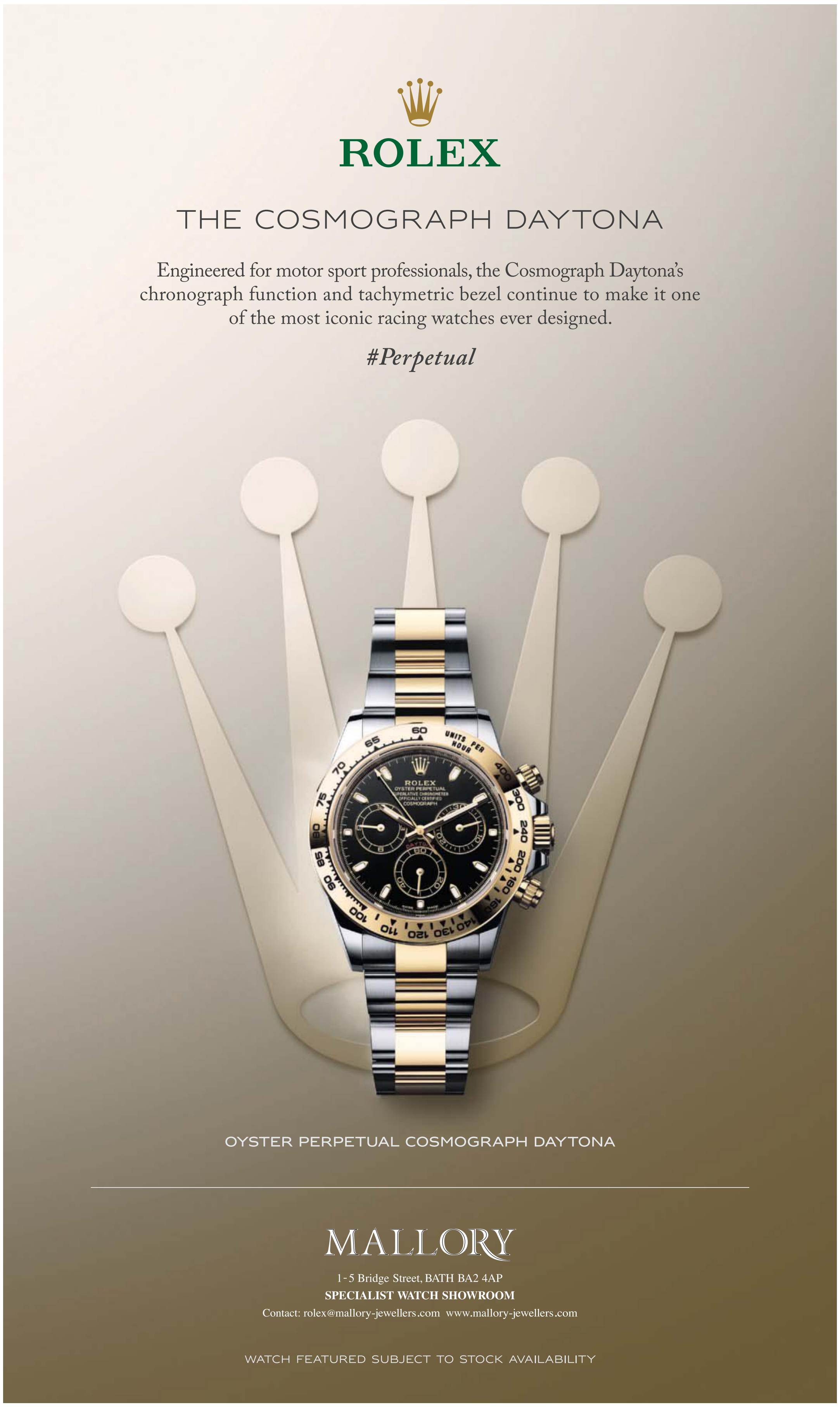
Urban, 59, said Christmas bookings were a case of "so far so good", but there was "no doubt the train strikes are proving super unhelpful".

The company, created in 2003 through a demerger from the old Bass brewing empire, has 1,646 venues under such brands as Miller & Carter and Ember Inns.

The group said that in the year to September 24, excluding the £70 million impact of utilities, profits had broadly recovered to pre-pandemic levels, while like-for-like sales for the year were up 1.1 per cent on 2019 levels. Total revenue doubled to £2.2 billion, while it swung from a pre-tax loss of £42 million to a profit of £8 million. Adjusted operating profit jumped from £29 million to £240 million.

Recent trading has been strong, with like-for-like sales up 9.2 per cent on 2019 in the past ten weeks, an acceleration from growth of 1.5 per cent in the prior ten weeks. Compared with last year, like-for-like growth was 6.5 per cent.

The shares rose by 9¼p, or 6.4 per cent, to close at 151¼p yesterday.



Heartburn drug ruling soothes GSK shares

Alex Ralph
Chief Business Correspondent

Billions of pounds were added to the value of drug companies including GSK after shares rallied strongly on signs that Zantac litigation in the US could collapse.

About 50,000 cases claiming that the old blockbuster heartburn drug caused cancer were dismissed in a federal court in Florida. Judge Robin Rosenberg this week rejected the evidence from pre-trial hearings, ruling there was a lack of "objective, science-based standards for the even-handed evaluation of data".

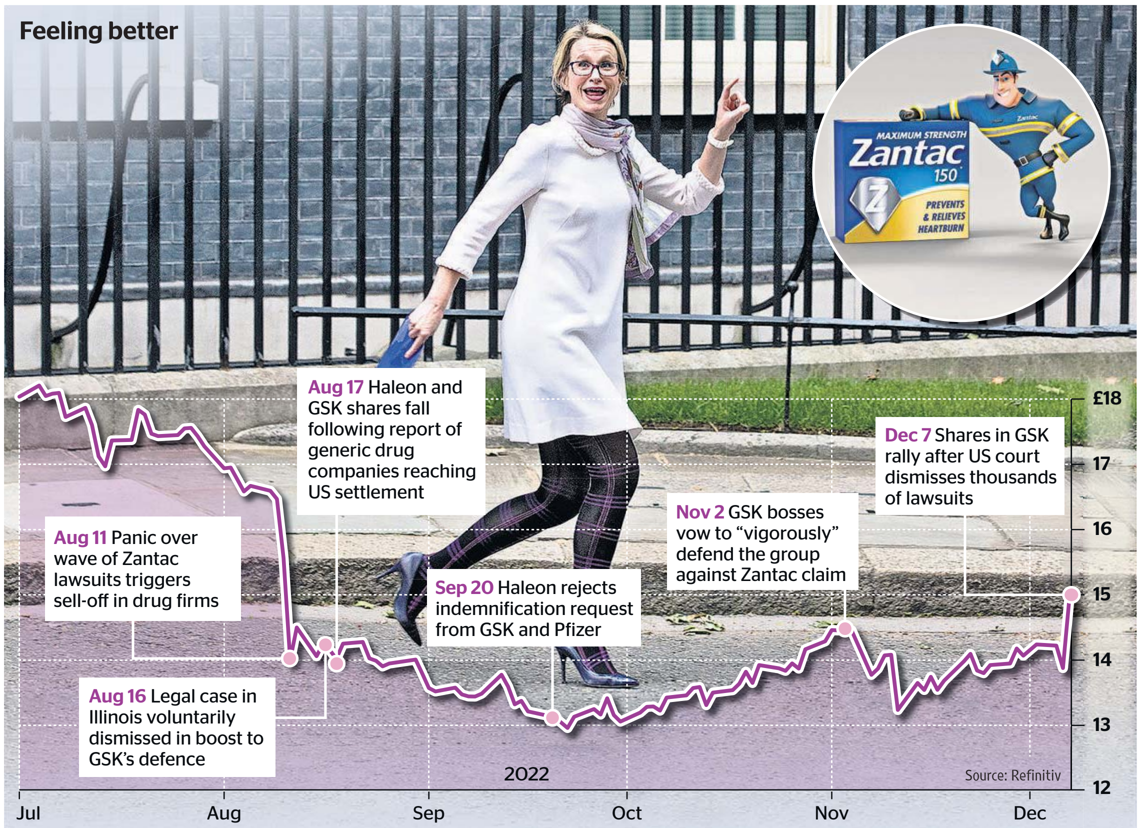
Shares in GSK rose as much as 15.5 per cent in London yesterday before trading up 104½p, or 7.5 per cent, at £14.92½p, increasing its value by about £4 billion. Haleon, the consumer healthcare company spun off by GSK in the summer, rebounded 10½p, or 3.6 per cent, to 305¾p. Sanofi, another drug company exposed to the litigation, rose 6 per cent in Paris.

The ruling had been keenly awaited by drug companies whose shares were sold off by investors in August on concerns about potential multibillion-pound liabilities.

Ranitidine, marketed as Zantac, helped fund GSK's global expansion, becoming one of the first prescription blockbusters and generating more than $1 billion in annual sales. It decreases the amount of acid produced by cells in the lining of the stomach and its label expanded over the years to become a popular treatment for heartburn. It was launched as a prescription drug by GSK in the 1980s before the rights to the over-the-counter product in America were sold to other drug companies, including Pfizer and most recently Sanofi.

The US Food and Drug Administration had issued an alert three years ago to patients, cautioning that Zantac may contain "low levels" of N-Nitrosodimethylamine, better known as NDMA, a substance that the FDA said was classified as a "probable human carcinogen".

The litigation has hung over share prices — including Haleon's since shortly after it was separated from GSK. Although Haleon was not a party to any Zantac claims and had never marketed the drug in the US, it had been notified of requests from GSK and Pfizer, a joint venture partner in the consumer healthcare business, for indemnification, which the company rejected in September. In a 341-page order the judge, who considered the admissibility of expert testimonies, said that "there is no scientist outside this litigation who concluded ranitidine causes cancer".



Dame Emma Walmsley, the GSK boss, saw its share price rally after signs that Zantac litigation in the US could collapse

GSK, one of Britain's two big pharma companies, said that after 12 epidemiological studies on the use of ranitidine, "the scientific consensus is that there is no consistent or reliable evidence it increases the risk of any cancer".

"The ruling reflects the state of that science and ensured that unreliable and litigation-driven science did not enter the federal courtroom."

GSK added: "In excluding plaintiffs' epidemiological evidence and expert testimony based on their deficiencies and unreliability, the court has dismissed all multi-district litigation [MDL] cases alleging the five remaining cancers in the MDL [liver, bladder, pancreatic, esophageal and stomach]. GSK will continue to defend itself vigorously, including against all claims brought at the state level."

Lawyers for the plaintiffs said in a joint statement that they were "extremely surprised by this miscarriage of justice and fully expect that the court of appeal will reverse these rulings".

Litigation continues in US state courts, with a large number of cases in Delaware and California. However, City analysts said the judge's order was a best-case scenario, removed about 80 per cent of the overhang on the shares and made it more likely the outstanding lawsuits could collapse.

Dame Emma Walmsley, GSK's chief executive, insisted last month that the company was "undistracted" by the claims. She spun off Haleon to focus on investing in GSK's drugs and vaccines pipeline, and the company announced further positive trial news yesterday for Jemperli, its oncology drug, this time as a treatment for a form of lung cancer.

BUSINESS BRIEFING



Stock markets across the world remain volatile following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Oil and gas prices have been spiralling, while British companies are scrambling to cope with the effects of soaring costs. With the situation changing by the hour, keeping up to date is essential. Get the latest news and market reaction by 8am, and analysis at 12.30pm, direct by email from the Business Editor, Richard Fletcher, and the Business News Editor, Martin Strydom.

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Analysis

The court ruling on the Zantac litigation was considered a "blue-sky" outcome for GSK and other drug company defendants, but the threat of liabilities has not yet been entirely lifted (Alex Ralph writes).

The order by Judge Robin Rosenberg in the multi-district litigation (MDL) in Florida dismissed tens of thousands of cases claiming that the heartburn drug Zantac caused cancer, pending appeal.

Analysts at Goodbody, reflecting the bullish reaction in the City and a rally in GSK's share price yesterday, said: "The plaintiffs were unable to provide admissible evidence that there is a causal link between Zantac and cancer. This is arguably a 'blue-sky' outcome for GSK."

GSK and other defendant drug companies, though, continue to battle a wave of cases in US state courts. Since the number of alleged cancers in the Florida litigation had been reduced from ten to five, lawyers had started moving cases, with many going to Delaware and California. The first California case is scheduled for February and pre-trial hearings will begin next month.

An analyst at UBS said: "Whether there will be a read-across from Florida to California is not clear as standards are different."

Analysts at Goodbody noted, however, the "majority of cases are filed in Delaware and the Delaware court has historically followed the precedent set by the MDL".

Investors dumped shares in GSK and other companies that have sold Zantac over the years, including Pfizer and Sanofi, in August amid panic over potential large liabilities from the lawsuits. They had been spooked by Morgan Stanley telling clients that the Zantac litigation could reach $10.5 billion to $45 billion, based on precedents.

Jefferies said the latest judgment should clear about 80 per cent or more of the Zantac overhang on the stocks. Shares in GSK remain about 12 per cent below where they traded at the start of August, and Haleon, the consumer healthcare business, about 7 per cent below when GSK spun off the company in July.

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Van hire group lifts full-year forecasts over rush for rentals

Robert Lea Industrial Editor

A shortage of vans because of supply chain problems and increased demand from large organisations that wish to rent rather than pay up front for their fleets have boosted revenues and profits at Redde Northgate.

The van hire group has diversified into operating fleets of vehicles to replace those involved in road traffic collisions and is benefiting from the number of cars back on the road after the economic restrictions of the pandemic. As a result, the company is also raising its dividend and has told analysts to lift their profit forecasts for the year.

Redde Northgate is a £900 million FTSE 250 company created during the pandemic by the merger of the Northgate van rental business with Redde, formerly known as Helphire, which sorts accident claims from businesses and fleets. It later acquired the remnants of Nationwide Accident Services, the vehicle repair provider.

For the six months to the end of October, the company, which also trades in Spain and has benefited from the economic uptick there from inbound tourism, reported a 13.6 per cent rise in revenues to £696.3 million with pre-tax profit up 42.1 per cent at £101.9 million, including the sale of ex-rental vehicles.

Redde Northgate increased the interim dividend by 25 per cent to 7½p. The shares, which closed up 23½p, or 6.3 per cent, to 397p, are yielding well in excess of 5 per cent on the expected total shareholder payout for the year.

The company used to be associated with the "white van man" of small retailers but the client list is much more diverse now with customers including Royal Mail, government departments, local authorities and big institutions.

While it has suffered weakening demand from retail customers, reflecting the state of the economy, it has been riding a boom in demand from telecoms and broadband installers.

"Our customers prefer rental over ownership. They prefer that flexibility over the cost of owning vehicles," Martin Ward, the chief executive, said.

Historically seen as a proxy for economic activity, the business is witnessing changed dynamics in the market with the shortage of available vehicles meaning utilisation is high, Ward said. The result has been increases in rates charged and rental profit margins comfortably above their 15 per cent target.

In addition, diversification through its merger into providing other vehicles to other parts of the market, such as insurers, means it is not so tied to the state of the UK or Spanish economies.

DANIEL LEAL-OLIVAS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Moving on Lord Heseltine, 90, the former Conservative deputy PM, is stepping down as chairman of Haymarket Group, the publishing and property business he co-founded in 1957, in favour of his son, Rupert. He remains as a director on the board

$500m plug-in for electric truck maker

Katie Prescott

Einride, the Swedish autonomous and electric road freight company, has raised $500 million in financing as it looks to grow its customer base and expand into new markets.

The funds are a mixture of $300 million of debt led by Barclays Europe and $200 million of equity. Investors in the Series C raise included AMF, the Swedish pension fund, Northzone, the London early-stage venture fund and Temasek, the Singapore sovereign wealth fund.

Gordon Beck, director of securitised products solutions at Barclays, said: "This landmark debt facility represents a key milestone in the financing of heavy-duty electric vehicles."

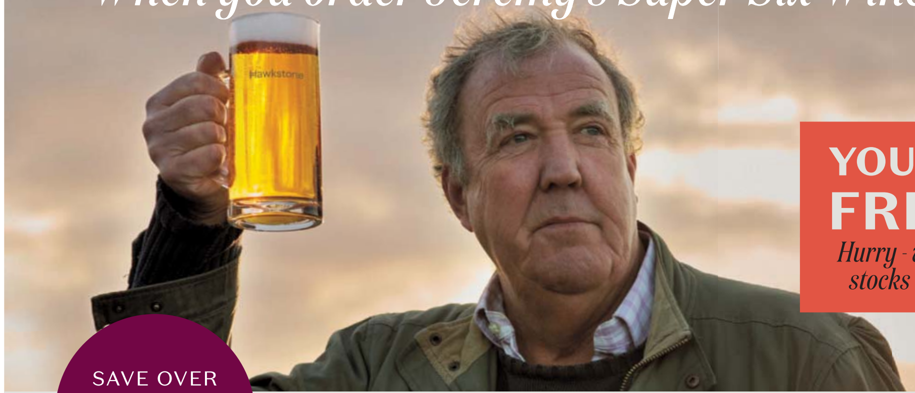
Founded in Stockholm in 2016, Einride develops self-driving and electric trucks and the software systems that they use to monitor deliveries. It operates in Sweden, Germany, Benelux and the US and its customers include Coca-Cola, Lidl, AB InBev and Maersk. It aims to cut the emissions from road freight industry, which account for 7 per cent of global CO_2. The sector consumes billions of barrels of oil per year.

Robert Falck, founder and chief executive, said: "We've created the Einride ecosystem to provide the most resilient and future-proof approach to electrifying freight. With the support from our investors and shared belief in this mission, we'll continue to drive disruptive change to global freight at scale."

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Home Reit investors may sue after short-seller woe

Home Reit, the sheltered housing investment trust that has come under attack from short-sellers, is facing new allegations that it misled shareholders and owes them redress for "significant losses" (James Hurley writes).

Harcus Parker, a law firm based in London that specialises in mounting class actions, said that it was considering suing Home Reit on behalf of investors after its research allegedly found that the trust had "used investors' money in a way which runs contrary to what investors were told".

Home Reit floated in October 2020 and then tapped investors for £850 million, which it spent on a portfolio of almost 12,000 beds in houses and small blocks of flats let to the homeless.

It says that "robust tenants" such as charities and local councils rent the properties, typically on 25-year leases, to house homeless people.

Harcus Parker claimed that some of the properties "have been found by local authorities to be unsuitable for housing vulnerable individuals" and therefore did not qualify as "exempt accommodation".

The law firm alleged that some of the properties had been marketed to students and professionals and even as holiday lets. It also raised concerns about the financial position of Home Reit's charities and housing association tenants, and questioned some of the property deals it had been involved in.

Last month Home Reit was hit by an attack from Viceroy Research, the short-seller that first raised the alarm over Wirecard. Viceroy flagged similar concerns with the business.

The activist investor Boatman Capital Research has also weighed in, pressing for the resignation of Home Reit's chairwoman Lynne Fennah and Marlene Wood, the chairwoman of its audit committee. Boatman Capital has accused the company of being "over-optimistic in its assumptions" on the value of its portfolio.

The allegations meant that the company's results, which were due last week, had to be delayed.

Home Reit's shares have fallen by 60 per cent this year and yesterday were down by another 1p, or 1.8 per cent, at 50p.

Home Reit called Viceroy's claims "baseless and misleading". A spokeswoman said it was reviewing Harcus Parker's allegations.

HOLLIE ADAMS/BLOOMBERG/GETTY IMAGES



Home Reit has a building portfolio of about 12,000 beds in houses and small blocks that it lets to local authorities and charities

Topps Tiles' biggest shareholder seeks to oust boss in supply row

Helen Cahill

Topps Tiles is under pressure to oust its chairman after it refused to buy almost a third of its tiles from a supplier that has built a 29.9 per cent stake in the business.

The tile retailer has criticised its largest shareholder, MS Galleon (MSG), for trying to remove Darren Shapland, the chairman, after Topps Tiles said that it would not buy more tiles from the investor's company, Cersanit.

MSG has requested a vote on putting its representatives Lidia Wolfinger and Michael Bartusiak on the board as non-executives to help push through its proposals.

Topps Tiles buys only 0.5 per cent of its goods from Cersanit and said its sourcing policy would not allow it to buy more than 10 per cent of its tiles from the supplier.

It has said any change in policy to procure 29.9 per cent of its tiles from Cersanit would not be in the best interests of other shareholders as it relied on a wide range of suppliers to maintain the quality of its products and ensure it can tap into interior design trends quickly.

Aberforth Partners, Topps Tiles co-founder Stuart Williams, Invesco Asset Management, Axa Investment Management and others have all said they would oppose MSG's request. The shareholders represent about 40 per cent of Topps Tiles' voting share capital. MSG will need to secure votes representing 50 per cent of share capital to pass its resolution.

Topps Tiles has also warned that purchases from Cersanit would need to comply with the City regulator's listing rules on commercial transactions with large shareholders. Keith Down, senior independent director of Topps Tiles, said MSG's actions were not "in the best interests of the company and its shareholders as a whole" and that MSG was "seeking simply to strengthen its own position".

Shapland, 56, said: "The board strongly rejects these proposals, which it believes expose a clear conflict of interest between MSG's objectives for Cersanit and the interests of all Topps shareholders."

MSG built its holding in Topps Tiles from 4.1 per cent to 20 per cent between May and November 2020. Cersanit then approached the company with its proposals last year, but Topps Tiles executives explained that it would not be in the interests of other investors.

MSG then voted against the reappointment of Shapland at the company's annual meeting in January this year and in the months after started increasing its stake to 29.9 per cent.

Shareholders will vote on the proposals at the company's annual meeting on January 18 next year.

In a statement, Topps Tiles said: "The board believes that the proposed appointment of MSG's non-executive directors has the primary objective of aligning Topps' business and its strategy to MSG's commercial objectives as owner of Cersanit and is therefore not in the best interests of the company and its shareholders as a whole."

The shares, which have fallen by about 30 per cent so far this year, fell 3p, or 6 per cent, to 47p.

Bathroom supplier exited Russia after invasion

Cersanit is a major European supplier of bathroom products, based in Poland, selling ceramic tiles, shower cubicles and other accessories across the continent, with factories in Poland, Germany, Romania and Ukraine. It is owned by MS Galleon, an investment company based in Vienna.

The company was forced to begin talks to dispose of assets based in Russia shortly after the invasion of Ukraine. Three large plants with a total investment value of €83 million were sold "so as not to be wrongly accused of any involvement in the conflict" or indirectly supporting the war.

In a statement released at the time, Cersanit's president, Mariusz Sośnierz, said: "Cersanit has been supporting Ukraine from the first day of this tragedy. We focus our efforts primarily on providing assistance to the employees of our plants in Ukraine and their families, ensuring their safety and the conditions for surviving difficult times. We also provide significant financial support."

BlackRock chief told to quit over ESG 'hypocrisy'

Callum Jones
US Business Correspondent

A small London-based activist investor has taken aim at BlackRock and called on the boss of the world's largest money manager to stand down.

Bluebell Capital, said to own about 0.01 per cent of BlackRock, claimed that under its veteran chief executive, Larry Fink — one of the most powerful figures on Wall Street — the firm had become "unreasonably exposed" to reputational risk. The hedge fund attacked a "chasm" between BlackRock's words and actions on the sustainable investment agenda, often known as environmental, social and governance (ESG).

Bluebell, with $250 million in assets, has targeted large companies. It successfully campaigned for the removal of Emmanuel Faber, the boss of Danone, the French food conglomerate, last year, although its calls for change at GlaxoSmithKline have so far fallen on deaf ears.

BlackRock, with $7.96 trillion in assets under management, is a giant in global finance. Founded in 1988, it has more than 16,000 staff and operations in 38 countries.

In a letter to Fink, Bluebell said BlackRock had changed its position on coal investment several times. Giuseppe Bivona and Marco Taricco, the investment bankers who lead Bluebell, wrote that the "contradictions and apparent hypocrisy" of BlackRock's actions had further politicised the debate around sustainable investment.

A BlackRock spokesman said: "In the past 18 months, Bluebell has waged a number of campaigns to promote their climate and governance agenda. BlackRock Investment Stewardship did not support their campaigns as we did not consider them to be in the best economic interests of our clients."

Shares in BlackRock fell $1.13, or 0.2 per cent, to close at $709.16.

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Put faith in Monks' diverse portfolio

MONKS INVESTMENT TRUST

Market cap	Discount/NAV
£2.32 billion	8 per cent

Patience has proven less of a virtue for shareholders in Monks Investment Trust, the little brother of Baillie Gifford's star fund Scottish Mortgage. The promise of high future earnings growth is less enticing as elevated inflation and aggressive interest rate rises have sapped risk appetites.

For FTSE 250 constituent Monks, a bias towards stocks priced for racy growth has resulted in an almighty comedown from the share price boom in the pandemic. The trust has recorded a 5.2 per cent slide in the value of its portfolio versus a fall of only 0.3 per cent in the benchmark it seeks to beat, in the latest six months. Investors are braced for further declines, with the shares priced at a discount to the trust's net asset value of just 8 per cent.

A six-month underperformance of the FTSE All-World, in sterling terms, is not surprising for anyone who has taken a look at Monks' holdings. Its top ten holdings include the US technology giants Microsoft and Google's parent Alphabet, which have suffered a hefty sell-off. But it is businesses exposed to consumer demand that delivered the heavier blow, including high-end exercise bike maker Peloton and online used-car retailer Carvana. Those holdings have been ditched. Likewise, the trust has trimmed its exposure to Chinese companies, which account for 2.9 per cent of assets, down from 4.1 per cent at the end of April. The bulk of the turnover in stocks is done, according to Spencer Adair, its lead manager.

The question for investors now is whether the worst of the damage is over and if the discount embedded in the share price represents a buying opportunity. There remain impediments to the value of the portfolio recovering its former glories in the near term.

Monks has ditched some turkeys. But elsewhere, heavy share price falls have been seen as a value opportunity, with existing holdings in online fashion retailer Farfetch, South Korean ecommerce company Coupang and pet supplier Chewy increasing in recent months. But those companies remain at the mercy of consumer spending power.

The danger is that the drag on the trust's performance from those companies is compounded. And even after the sell-off suffered by some of its holdings, the average forward price/earnings ratio for the portfolio stands at almost 20, versus a multiple of 15 for the benchmark. Growth stocks could remain out of favour while inflation is elevated.

Another way of looking at it? There are signs that the ferocity of inflation and efforts by the Federal Reserve to tame consumer price rises might both be easing. In October US consumer price inflation cooled to 7.7 per cent, down from 8.2 per cent in September. Markets are pricing in a lower peak in interest rates, which are now expected to top out in May at 4.93 per cent, from the 3.75-4 per cent current federal funds rate.

What's more, Monks continues to suffer a less severe decline in the value of its assets than its larger peer, Scottish Mortgage, amid the shift away from speculative growth stocks. Why? While the latter runs winners in a big way, Monks' portfolio is more diverse, a consequence of the broader definition managers attach to growth. As well as the usual tech names, Monks also names insurance company AJ Gallagher, building materials supplier CRH and budget airline Ryanair in its top 30 holdings.

Buying and holding stocks over multiple years in an attempt to benefit from compound returns is a shrewd strategy. Monks' bias towards stocks with punchy valuations is riskier. This time last year it could point to a ten-year outperformance of the FTSE World index, but recent performance has eaten away at that lead. With inflation easing, there is the chance that the worst of Monks' slide might be approaching.

Little brother



Top 10 holdings
As a % of total assets

Holding	%
Elevance Health	4.8%
Martin Marietta Materials	2.8%
Reliance Industries	2.8%
Microsoft	2.7%
The Schiehallion Fund Limited	2.6%
Arthur J. Gallagher	2.5%
Alphabet	2.5%
Moody's	2.4%
Service Corporation International	2.3%
Prosus	2.2%

ADVICE Hold
WHY The shares could recover some of their recent losses if inflation continues to ease

MOONPIG

Market cap	Half-year profit
£519 million	£9.1 million

Moonpig is a natural victim of the downturn in consumer spending on non-essentials. Convincing customers to splash out on a personalised greeting card is a harder sell and people are trading down on gift purchases.

The result? The online greeting card company has cut sales guidance for this year to about £320 million, from the £350 million previously expected. Revenue over the latest six months was flat, even after lumping in the almost £12 million revenue generated by acquiring the gifting and experiences companies Red Letter Days and Buyagift in July. Trading conditions worsened in October and November; Royal Mail industrial action hasn't helped.

Not surprisingly, investors have rebased their growth expectations. The shares now trade at 11 times forward earnings, far below a multiple of 42 recorded at the time of the group's IPO in February last year. That is not enough to make the shares appealing for bargain seekers.

As is the case with companies attempting to execute on lofty growth ambitions, Moonpig has been spending big to capture market share. That is less palatable when macroeconomic conditions worsen.

Over the six months to the end of October, administrative and selling expenses rose by about a third, which was responsible for the halving in pre-tax profits during the period. That spending included additional staff and technology investment — hiring is due to slow but plans for more "discipline" around controlling costs elsewhere remain vague.

Yet Moonpig has been spending faster than revenue has been growing over the longer term, too. Over the three years to the end of October revenue increased 115 per cent but has been outpaced by a 147 per cent rise in selling and administrative expenses over the same period. Without reining spending in the group is more vulnerable to a worse slowdown in sales.

The interest bill will also rise this year. Finance costs are set to almost double during the second half, compared with the first six months, totalling between £14 million and £15 million for the financial year. Catalysts for the shares are hard to spot in the near term.

ADVICE Avoid
WHY A slowdown in sales and elevated spending could mean profit expectations are missed

NEWS IN BRIEF

Banks' mortgage vow

Banks should live up to their responsibilities and support mortgage borrowers who are struggling to make payments, Jeremy Hunt said yesterday. The chancellor's comments came after he met executives from the UK's biggest high street banks, including NatWest, Lloyds, HSBC and Barclays. The banks agreed to offer support to customers, the Treasury said, such as switching to cheaper fixed rates without a new affordability test. "We expect every lender to support any mortgage borrowers who are finding it tough," Hunt said.

All aboard Stagecoach

Stagecoach says buses are motoring back after Covid, with its half-year profits doubling to £36 million on revenues up 15 per cent at £669 million. The firm, which was bought by German investor DWS this year for £595 million, said bus passenger numbers, while recovering, were 80 per cent what they were before the pandemic. It also reported a loss in its large operations in the capital as staff shortages led to performance penalties from Transport for London.

Mitie inquiry dropped

Allegations have been dropped against government contractor Mitie Group and its outsourcing partner, the US firm PAE, that it acted anti-competitively in a tender for immigration detention work at Heathrow airport and in Co Durham. Mitie, the provider of office caretaker services, said the Competition and Markets Authority had dropped its investigation. The Home Office may yet appeal against the decision. Mitie shares closed up ½p, or 0.5 per cent, at 74½p.

Fantasy payout for staff

Games Workshop, the fantasy figurine maker, is planning a £1,500 payout to each employee as it anticipates a fall in pre-tax profits. In an estimate for the six months to November 27, it said it expected profits of £83 million at least, against £88.2 million last year, adding that trading was in line with expectations. It also raised dividends to 165p a share, from 100p in 2021. The firm said John Brewis, senior independent non-executive director, would become chairman on January 1.

PRICES

Major indices

New York	
Dow Jones	33597.92 (+1.58)
Nasdaq Composite	10958.55 (-56.34)
S&P 500	3933.92 (-7.34)
Tokyo	
Nikkei 225	27686.40 (-199.47)
Hong Kong	
Hang Seng	18814.82 (-626.36)
Amsterdam	
AEX Index	718.34 (-5.34)
Sydney	
AO	7423.20 (-64.50)
Frankfurt	
DAX	14261.19 (-82.00)
Singapore	
Straits	3225.45 (-26.92)
Brussels	
BEL20	3706.62 (-24.58)
Paris	
CAC-40	6660.59 (-27.20)
Zurich	
SMI Index	11009.95 (-99.38)
DJ Euro Stoxx 50	3920.90 (-18.29)
London	
FTSE 100	7489.19 (-32.20)
FTSE 250	18930.57 (-169.51)
FTSE 350	4133.91 (-20.56)
FTSE Eurotop 100	3403.69 (-21.80)
FTSE All-Shares	4093.68 (-20.80)
FTSE Non Financials	5019.37 (-21.79)
techMARK 100	6254.81 (-28.43)
Bargains	n/a
US$	1.2220 (+0.0090)
Euro	1.1618 (+0.0029)
£:SDR	0.98 (+0.00)
Exchange Index	79.76 (+0.25)
Bank of England official close (4pm)	
CPI	126.20 Oct (2015 = 100)
RPI	356.20 Oct (Jan 1987 = 100)
RPIX	290.10 Jun (Jan 1987 = 100)
Morningstar Long Commodity	677.16 (+5.72)
Morningstar Long/Short Commod	4703.45 (+27.75)

London Financial Futures

	Period	Open	High	Low	Sett	Vol	Open Int
Long Gilt	Dec 22	107.38	107.43	107.07	107.65	1164	73289
	Mar 23	106.80	106.82	105.95	106.62	195419	383242
3-Mth Sterling	Dec 22	98.820	98.825	98.790	98.806	7310	347378
	Mar 23	98.785	98.795	98.755	98.771	8310	229855
	Jun 23						
	Sep 23						
	Dec 23						
3-Mth Euribor	Dec 22	97.860	97.870	97.850	97.855	178997	694389
	Mar 23	97.205	97.225	97.185	97.195	110559	529154
	Jun 23	97.025	97.070	97.015	97.045	83015	479144
	Sep 23	97.010	97.075	97.000	97.050	90075	417266
	Dec 23	97.105	97.165	97.080	97.135	98961	383450
3-Mth Euroswiss	Dec 22	100.61	100.62	100.59	100.62	488	22748
	Mar 23						
	Jun 23						
	Sep 23						
FTSE100	Dec 22	7563.5	7575.0	7494.5	7510.0	99274	586778
	Mar 23	7559.5	7571.0	7495.0	7509.5	6585	11324
FTSEurofirst 80	Dec 22				5330.5		
	Mar 23				5311.5		

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Commodities

ICIS pricing (London 7.30pm)

Crude Oils ($/barrel FOB)

Brent Physical	77.10	-2.69
BFOE(Feb)	77.28	-2.18
BFOE(Mar)	77.73	-2.08
WTI(Feb)	72.28	-2.18
WTI(Mar)	72.52	-2.11

Products ($/MT)

Spot CIF NW Europe (prompt delivery)

Premium Unld	704.00	706.00	-14.00
Gasoil EEC	794.75	795.75	-13.50
3.5 Fuel Oil	322.00	327.00	-3.25
Naphtha	577.00	579.00	-15.00

ICE Futures

Gas Oil

Dec	805.00-804.25	Mar	790.50-790.00
Jan	806.75-806.25	Apr	778.50-777.75
Feb	800.50-799.75		Volume: 655600

Brent (9.00pm)

Feb	78.00-77.99	May	78.65-78.56
Mar	78.31-78.29	Jun	78.50-78.47
Apr	78.49-78.47		Volume: 1923267

LIFFE

Cocoa

Dec	2131-2113	Mar	1819-1810
Mar	1956-1954	May	1888-1800
May	1897-1893	Jul	1880-1761
Jul	1910-1874		
Sep	1874-1842		
Dec	1845-1830		Volume: 66737

RobustaCoffee

Jan	1923-1919	Sep	1841-1740
Mar	1870-1869	Nov	1818-1810
May	1854-1840		
Jul	1857-1805		Volume: 18571

White Sugar (FOB)

Reuters		Oct	491.40-487.10
		Dec	482.80-460.00
Mar	537.60-536.90	Mar	477.60-474.70
May	526.00-522.30	May	476.40-458.40
Aug	506.40-503.90		Volume: 59678


KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES

Swift shakes off talks of FTX tie-up

Sam Bankman-Fried's FTX is said to have reached the late stages of negotiating a sponsorship deal worth more than $100 million with Taylor Swift, but talks with the pop star ended just months before the exchange's collapse last month.

The discussions included a ticketing arrangement with digital certificates known as non-fungible tokens from the record-breaking *Anti-Hero* singer-songwriter, according to the Financial Times.

FTX had previously struck deals with Tom Brady, the US football star, and Gisele Bündchen, the supermodel, as well as with the tennis player Naomi Osaka.

Bankman-Fried, 30, and a representative for Swift, 32, declined to comment.

FTX filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in Delaware last month, owing money to up to one million creditors and revealing a billion-dollar shortfall in client assets. Claire Watanabe, a senior executive in FTX's business development team, was seen by former employees as a driving force behind the pursuit of Swift, the second-most streamed artist on Spotify this year. Watanabe could not be reached for comment.

Bankman-Fried was urged to drop the talks by senior executives including Brett Harrison, the FTX US president, according to the report.

A person close to the discussions said Swift never contemplated agreeing to endorse the exchange. "The discussion was around a potential tour sponsorship that did not happen," they said.

The day's biggest movers

Company	Change
GSK Zantac ruling victory	7.5%
Indivior Positive capital markets day	6.8%
Mitchells & Butlers Swings into profit	6.5%
Redde Northgate Higher half-year profits	6.3%
Ocado Recovers some losses	3.6%
Weir Group Bearish broker note from Morgan Stanley	-4.1%
Tullow Oil Lower oil prices	-5.4%
Dr Martens Extends losses	-5.4%
Baltic Classifieds Group Disappointing interim results	-7.9%
Moonpig Cuts annual sales outlook	-8.9%

Indivior on a high in the fight against addiction



***Jessica Newman* Market report**

A capital markets day injected some life into Indivior's shares as the drugs developer and manufacturer told investors that it expects net revenue run rates from its next-generation injectable anti-opioid treatment, Sublocade, to hit £1 billion by the end of 2025.

The FTSE 250 company, one of the world's largest for combating opioid addiction, reckons that Sublocade revenues could ultimately hit a peak of more than $1.5 billion (£1.2 billion) as it pursues big opportunities in the US justice system.

Mark Crossley, Indivior's chief executive, said in New York that he expects it to achieve "significant operating margin expansion" over the medium term through the improvement of gross margins and a focus on operating expenses.

Indivior, which said earlier this year that it was considering a dual listing in the US, confirmed it is aiming to float on the Nasdaq exchange, which it believes will elevate its profile in its largest market.

The company is forecasting full-year revenues of $890 million to $915 million and expects adjusted operating profit to come in modestly higher than last year's $187 million.

The update was well received by investors as the shares jumped 114p, or 6.8 per cent, to £17.86 — their highest price in more than four years.

The FTSE 100 was hit by another decline in big oil stocks, causing it to close 32.20 points, or 0.4 per cent, lower at 7,489.19, while the more UK-focused FTSE 250 retreated 169.51 points, or 0.9 per cent, to 18,930.57.

Oil shares were under renewed selling pressure and tracked the black stuff lower as weaker than expected import and export data from China heightened investors' fears about the global economy. **Harbour Energy** fell by 9p, or 2.9 per cent, to 300¼p; **BP** by 10¾p, or 2.2 per cent, to 464p; and **Shell** by 43p, or 1.8 per cent, to £23.15½. Among the mid-caps, shares in **Tullow Oil** slipped 2¼p, or 5.4 per cent, to 38¼p, and **John Wood Group** lost 4¼p, or 3.3 per cent, to 125p.

Moonpig was another big faller, tumbling 13½p, or 8.9 per cent, to 137¾p after the greetings cards retailer lowered its annual revenue forecast as it posted a fall in half-year profits, which it blamed on the impact of postal strikes.

Weir Group struggled after a broker downgrade. Morgan Stanley resumed coverage of the engineer with an "underperform" — against an "overweight" recommendation previously — amid concerns that orders may slow next year, meaning margin expansion will be harder to achieve. The shares closed 72p, or 4.1 per cent, lower at £16.83.

Healthcare stocks were in high demand, with **GSK** undoubtedly the star performer of the session. The shares rose 104½p, or 7.5 per cent, to £14.92½ after the drugs giant, along with Pfizer and Sanofi, defeated thousands of lawsuits in a US federal court that had claimed the heartburn drug Zantac caused cancer.

Haleon, which demerged from GSK in the summer, also raced higher by 10½p, or 3.6 per cent, to 305¾p. The shares were given a boost by analysts at Barclays, who raised their "equal-weight" rating to "overweight", arguing that the company is "investible again for those without the appetite for pharma litigation risk".

AstraZeneca was also among the top risers, improving 108p, or 1 per cent, to £112.58 after it said its breast cancer drug Enhertu reduced the risk of death by 36 per cent. **Dechra Pharmaceuticals** was also swept up in the sector-wide rally, with shares in the veterinary drugs group closing up 56p, or 2.1 per cent, at £27.36.

Wall Street report

A sell-off in technology stocks over fears of a recession triggered by higher rates hitting company earnings dampened sentiment in a mixed session. The Dow Jones industrial average inched up 1.58 points, or 0.01 per cent, to 33,597.92.

TELECOMS

Emiratis upgrade Vodafone stake

Emirates Telecommunications raised its stake in Vodafone Group to 11 per cent yesterday, but said it had no plans to make an offer for the London-listed group.

The United Arab Emirates-based telecoms service provider, the biggest shareholder in Vodafone, previously held a stake of about 10 per cent in the British company.

Vodafone had said on Monday that Nick Read, its chief executive, was stepping down at the end of the year.



Vodafone warned of lower profits last month

Vodafone, whose shares have lost more than 20 per cent of their value so far this year and have nearly halved during Read's tenure, had warned on profit last month. Yesterday the shares closed down 1¾p, or 1.8 per cent, at 87¾p.

Separately, Emirates Telecommunications is reported to be studying the feasibility of an offer for part or all of Vodafone's stake in the Johannesburg-listed Vodacom Group as it seeks to boost its international footprint in Africa.

London Grain Futures

LIFFE Wheat (close £/t)

Jan	287.25	Mar	242.50	May	244.50
Jul	unq	Nov	230.00	Volume: 845	

London Metal Exchange (Official)

	Cash	3mth	Dec 22
Copper Gde A ($/tonne)	8333.0-8334.0	8370.0-8375.0	8355.0-8365.0
Lead ($/tonne)	2205.0-2206.0	2222.0-2224.0	2223.0-2228.0
Zinc Spec Hi Gde ($/tonne)	3138.0-3140.0	3112.0-3113.0	3030.0-3035.0
Alum Hi Gde ($/tonne)	2450.0-2450.5	2476.5-2477.0	2538.0-2543.0
Nickel ($/tonne)	28700.0-28725.0	28900.0-28925.0	29475.0-29525.0
Tin ($/tonne) (15mth)	24375.0-24475.0	24275.0-24325.0	23175.0-23225.0

Gold/Precious metals (US dollars per ounce)

Because of a technical issue, the gold fix prices are from Tuesday.

Bullion: Open $1770.87

Close $1781.91-1782.09 **High** $1786.63

Low $1768.11

AM $1773.35 **PM** $1773.80

Krugerrand $1763.00-2858.00 (£1442.07-2337.74)

Platinum $1010.00 (£826.14)

Silver $22.70 (£18.57)

Palladium $1860.00 (£1521.41)

European money deposits %

Currency	1mth	3mth	6mth	12mth
Dollar	0.13	0.20	0.29	0.55
Sterling	3.36	3.72	4.26	0.81
Euro	0.10	0.15	0.20	0.50

Money rates %

Base Rates Clearing Banks 3.00 ECB Refi 2.00 US Fed Fd 3.75-4.00

Halifax Mortgage Rate 5.74

Treasury Bills (Dis) Buy: 1 mth 3.648; 3 mth 3.379. Sell: 1 mth 2.500; 3 mth 2.700

	1 mth	2 mth	3 mth	6 mth	12 mth
Interbank Rates	3.3574	0.0000	3.7239	4.2626	0.0000
Eurodollar Deps	4.33-4.63	4.66-4.91	4.67-4.92	4.98-5.23	5.41-5.58

Sterling spot and forward rates

Mkt Rates for	Range	Close	1 month	3 month
Copenhagen	8.6052-8.6507	8.6507-8.6519	146ds	445ds
Euro	1.1630-1.1570	1.1630-1.1630	14pr	38pr
Montreal	1.6535-1.6677	1.6670-1.6673	13pr	24pr
New York	1.2105-1.2225	1.2225-1.2226	14pr	31pr
Oslo	12.075-12.255	12.228-12.232	34ds	169ds
Stockholm	12.609-12.680	12.673-12.676	348ds	805ds
Tokyo	165.94-167.40	166.67-166.68	55ds	163ds
Zurich	1.1411-1.1500	1.1500-1.1501	35ds	96ds

Premium = pr Discount = ds

Dollar rates

Australia	1.4848-1.4850
Canada	1.3637-1.3638
Denmark	7.0766-7.0771
Euro	0.9513-0.9514
Hong Kong	7.7854-7.7859
Japan	136.34-136.34
Malaysia	4.3950-4.4000
Norway	10.003-10.005
Singapore	1.3546-1.3547
Sweden	10.367-10.369
Switzerland	0.9405-0.9409

Other Sterling

Argentina peso	207.60-207.64
Australia dollar	1.8152-1.8154
Bahrain dinar	0.4570-0.4639
Brazil real	6.3615-6.3652
Euro	1.1629-1.1631
Hong Kong dollar	9.5179-9.5189
India rupee	100.60-100.61
Indonesia rupiah	19076-19106
Kuwait dinar KD	0.3735-0.3758
Malaysia ringgit	5.3276-5.3337
New Zealand dollar	1.9186-1.9190
Singapore dollar	1.6560-1.6563
S Africa rand	20.961-20.972
U A E dirham	4.4757-4.4781

Exchange rates

	Bid	Change
Australia $	1.813	-0.01
Canada $	1.660	-0.01
Denmark Kr	8.635	-0.02
Euro €	1.161	
Hong Kong $	9.496	-0.01
Hungary	479.143	-1.95
Indonesia	19069.192	-20.07
Israel Shk	4.188	+0.01
Japan Yen	166.705	-0.33
New Zealand $	1.913	-0.02
Norway Kr	12.209	
Poland	5.448	-0.02
Russia	76.734	-0.48
S Africa Rd	20.934	-0.25
Sweden Kr	12.632	-0.08
Switzerland Fr	1.145	
Turkey Lira	22.732	-0.05
USA $	1.219	

Rates supplied by Morningstar

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An open letter to our customers

At Royal Mail, we know this is the time of year when you rely on us most.

So we deeply regret that the Communication Workers Union (CWU) is planning further strikes on 9, 11, 14, 15, 23 and 24 December 2022.

Last week we delivered around 700,000 parcels during strike days and recovered service quickly. I want to thank personally more than 11,000 of our employees who came back to work during that last strike.

But the task gets more challenging as Christmas nears. So we're asking customers to **send Second Class mail by 12 December and First Class by 16 December 2022.**

We'll do everything we can to respond. And we're doing everything we can to settle this dispute.

Eight months of talks with the union. A pay offer of up to 9% over 18 months. But even before the strikes we were losing £1m a day. So we can only afford that offer if the union stops resisting the changes needed to deliver what you, our customers, ask for today.

You're sending 60% fewer letters than you used to, and the number keeps on falling. You're sending more parcels, which you want delivered quickly, including at weekends.

We've also listened carefully to our employees. Existing employees who aren't required to work Sundays won't be required to do so. And we're introducing family-friendly options to help with our need for more afternoon working.

We are bringing in new recruits on different contracts, but their terms, conditions and pensions will still be the best in the industry. This is not the gig economy. We have a generous voluntary redundancy scheme and are NOT making compulsory redundancies.

We are the only people who deliver a universal one-price-goes-anywhere service to the whole United Kingdom, and we know how much you need us.

We urge the CWU to call off these damaging strikes. And we'll do everything we can to deliver Christmas.

For everybody.

Simon Thompson
CEO, Royal Mail

royalmail.com/latest-news

The Times unit trust information service

ALLIANZ GLOBAL INVESTORS
Inv Serv: 020 7065 1400 Helpline: 0800 317 573

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Gilt Yield A ‡@	206.01	...	+0.27	...
Strategic Bond Fund ‡@	158.11	...	+0.09	2.63
UK Corp Bond C ‡@	104.79	...	-0.78	3.87
UK Eqty C ‡@	6317.26	...	-14.91	3.28
UK Eqty Inc A ‡@	320.90	...	-0.61	4.60
UK Gwth A ‡@	7921.28	...	-53.78	...
UK Index A Inc ‡@	1423.81	...	-5.83	3.01
UK Mid Cap A ‡@	4654.61	...	-11.35	0.07

ARTEMIS FUND MGRS LTD
0800 092 2051
Authorised Inv Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Capital R Acc ‡@	2131.20	...	-2.80	...
Euro Opps R Acc ‡@	91.26	...	-0.48	...
Euro Opps R Inc ‡@	85.36	...	-0.46	...
European Growth R Acc ‡@	365.88	...	-0.86	2.11
Global Energy R Acc ‡@	42.39	...	-0.69	1.10
Global Growth R Acc ‡@	336.05	...	-0.67	...
Global Income R Acc ‡@	155.32	...	-0.82	4.11
Global Income R Inc ‡@	98.85	...	-0.51	4.26
Global Select R Acc ‡@	148.70	...	-0.76	...
High Income R Inc ‡@	62.10	...	-0.12	...
Income R Acc ‡@	502.26	...	-1.30	3.91
Income R Inc ‡@	220.19	...	-0.57	4.03
Monthly Dist R Inc ‡@	64.79	...	-0.19	...
Strategic Assets R Acc ‡	83.63	...	-0.18	...
Strategic Bond R M Acc ‡@	95.54	...	+0.01	2.99
Strategic Bond R M Inc ‡@	50.66	...	...	3.05
Strategic Bond R Q Acc ‡@	95.37	...	+0.01	3.16
Strategic Bond R Q Inc ‡@	50.42	...	+0.01	3.21
UK Growth R Acc ‡@	651.82	...	-3.89	1.21
UK Smaller Cos R Acc ‡@	1821.79	...	-23.42	0.88
UK Special Sits R Acc ‡@	656.44	...	-3.67	1.07

AXA FRAMLINGTON UNIT MGMT LTD
Dling: 0845 602 1952 Priv Clients: 0845 777 5511

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Equity Inc ‡@	572.40	...	-2.70	...
Gilt Acc @	201.30	211.80	+0.10	1.08
Gilt Inc @	74.35	78.24	-0.39	1.09
Health Acc ‡@	2984.00	...	-7.00	...
Jap Smlr Co Ac @	62.56	66.09	-0.19	0.30
Managed Inc ‡@	138.30	...	...	4.20
Monthly Inc Inc ‡@	239.00	...	-1.30	...
UK Growth Inc ‡@	216.80	...	-2.00	0.64
UK Select Opps Inc ‡@	1910.00	...	-16.00	1.04
UK Sml Cos Inc ‡@	263.80	...	-2.60	0.04

AXA FUND MANAGERS LTD
Admin & Enq 0117 989 0808
AXA Trusts

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Gen Acc ‡@	2101.00	...	+6.00	...
Gen Inc ‡@	1079.00	...	-2.00	...

UK/Global Investment Companies

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Euro Acc A ‡@	234.70	...	...	...
Extra Inc Inc B ‡@	86.74	...	+0.24	...
Global Gwth Acc R ‡@	288.10	...	+4.10	0.52
Japan Acc A ‡@	162.30	...	+2.20	1.51
Pac Gwth Acc A ‡@	479.80	...	-17.60	2.30

CIS UNIT MANAGERS LTD
08457 46 46 46

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
European Gwth ‡@	197.50	...	-1.50	...
Sus Leaders ‡@	756.30	...	-1.50	1.03
UK Growth ‡@	618.40	...	-4.40	2.01
UK Income ‡@	211.10	...	-1.00	...

CLOSE FUND MANAGEMENT LTD
0870 606 6402

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Beacon Inv ‡	84.88	...	+0.35	0.01

Dealing: 020 7426 6232

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Winchester ‡	3616.58	...	+36.15	0.87

EDENTREE INV MGMT LTD
0800 358 3010

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Resp & Sust Sterling Bond ‡	86.90	...	-0.03	3.81
Resp & Sust Eurp Eq ‡	302.30	...	-0.40	1.77
Resp & Sust Glbl Eq ‡	309.60	...	-2.40	0.08
Resp & Sust Mgd Income ‡	120.10	...	+0.30	4.93
Resp & Sust UK Eq ‡	215.50	...	-0.80	0.97
Resp & Sust UK Equity Opps ‡	269.40	...	-1.20	0.88

F & C FUND MANAGEMENT LTD (OEICS)
Enqs: 0870 601 6183 Dealing: 0870 601 6083
Share Class 1 - Retail

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corporate Bd ‡@	50.51	...	-0.06	1.57
Emerging Mkts ‡@	116.50	...	-0.50	...
Euro Gwth & Inc 1 ‡@	1128.00	...	-8.00	...
Extra Inc Bond ‡@	43.55	...	+0.01	1.85
FTSE All-Shr Track ‡@	418.30	...	-1.90	3.02
Global Gwth SC1 ‡@	303.60	...	-2.70	...
High Inc Trst @	11.11	11.71	...	5.73
Max Inc Bond ‡@	42.87	...	-0.07	3.11
Multi Man Caut ‡@	70.41	...	...	3.18
Multi Man Distr ‡@	60.44	...	...	3.37
North Amer ‡@	814.90	...	-6.90	...
Pacific Gwth ‡@	481.20	...	-4.40	...
Strategic Bd ‡@	196.30	...	-0.10	1.80
UK Equity ‡@	3399.00	...	-14.00	...
UK Gwth & Inc Acc 1 ‡@	658.50	...	...	...
UK Gwth & Inc Dist ‡@	234.70	...	...	...
UK Smaller Cos ‡@	1003.00	...	-9.00	0.19

FIDELITY INTERNATIONAL
Private Clnts 0800 414161 Broker Dlgs 0800 414181

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Amer Spec Sits ‡@	2319.00	...	-31.00	...
American ‡@	4926.00	...	-69.00	...
Euro Opps ‡@	547.50	...	-3.60	...
European ‡@	3251.00	...	-20.00	0.32
Extra Income ‡@	22.76	...	+0.03	5.10
Glob Spec Sits ‡@	5360.00	...	-55.00	...
Global Focus ‡@	2860.00	...	-25.00	...
International ‡@	149.50	...	+0.20	0.08
Japan ‡@	521.40	...	-0.30	0.51
Moneybldr Bal ‡@	44.33	...	-0.13	...
Moneybldr Glob	327.60	327.60	-0.10	0.21
Moneybldr Gwth ‡@	76.12	...	-0.95	2.97
Moneybldr Inc ‡@	29.60	...	+0.04	4.36
Moneybldr UK Ind ‡@	126.63	...	-0.73	2.89

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Special Sits ‡@	4407.00	...	-26.00	...
Wealthbuilder	69.75	72.18	+0.53	0.44

HALIFAX INVESTMENT FUND MGRS LTD
01296 386 386
Authorised Inv Funds
Share Class `C

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corporate Bond ‡@	32.43	...	-0.03	3.02
Ethical ‡@	107.40	...	-1.20	0.01
European ‡@	104.30	...	-0.50	1.90
Far Eastern ‡	111.10	...	-1.10	1.79
Fund of Inv Tst ‡@	132.60	...	-2.00	0.26
Intl Gwth ‡	121.60	...	-1.00	1.11
Japanese ‡	65.21	...	-0.28	1.41
North Amer ‡	144.70	...	-1.10	0.28
Smaller Cos ‡	104.50	...	-3.20	0.80
Special Sits ‡@	46.52	...	-0.23	1.49
UK Equity Inc ‡@	88.19	...	-0.22	...
UK FTSE 100 IT ‡@	68.14	...	-0.25	2.68
UK FTSE All-S IT ‡@	76.90	...	-0.36	2.54
UK Growth ‡@	79.70	...	-0.20	3.19

HSBC GLOBAL ASSET MGMT (UK) LTD
Enq: 0845 745 6123 Dlg: 0845 745 6126 Mon-Fri 8-6
HSBC Index Tracker Investment Funds (OEIC)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Amer Ind Acc ‡@	892.36	...	-8.31	1.01
Amer Ind Inc ‡@	718.88	...	-6.66	1.01
Euro Ind Acc ‡@	1111.62	...	-7.36	2.34
Euro Ind Inc ‡@	710.23	...	-4.70	2.42
FTSE 100 Ind Acc ‡@	270.86	...	-0.98	3.14
FTSE 100 Ind Inc ‡@	123.04	...	-0.45	3.22
FTSE 250 Ind Acc ‡@	281.17	...	-2.86	2.28
FTSE 250 Ind Inc ‡@	173.74	...	-1.77	2.27
FTSE All-S Acc ‡@	689.53	...	-3.22	3.16
FTSE All-S Inc ‡@	348.60	...	-1.63	3.24
Jap Ind Acc ‡@	135.50	...	-0.53	1.97
Jap Ind Inc ‡@	105.60	...	-0.42	2.30
Pac Ind Acc ‡@	489.17	...	-3.63	2.59
Pac Ind Inc ‡@	307.86	...	-2.28	2.66

HSBC Investment Funds (OEIC) - Retail Share Class

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Balanced Acc ‡@	238.68	...	-1.05	0.59
Balanced Inc ‡@	151.95	...	-0.14	...
Corp Bd Acc ‡@	264.86	...	-0.19	4.79
Corp Bd Inc ‡@	103.58	...	-0.07	5.15
Gilt & Fd Int Acc ‡@	497.78	...	+1.62	1.19
Gilt & Fd Int Inc ‡@	74.17	...	+0.24	1.58
Income Acc ‡@	687.74	...	-1.61	4.28
Income Inc ‡@	287.62	...	-0.67	4.42
Monthly Inc Acc ‡@	313.41	...	+0.77	3.21
Monthly Inc Inc ‡@	127.01	...	-0.23	...
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Acc ‡@	140.60	...	-0.30	4.15
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Inc ‡@	63.26	...	-0.13	4.29
UK Gth & Inc Acc ‡@	140.60	...	-0.30	4.15
UK Gth & Inc Inc ‡@	63.26	...	-0.13	4.29

HSBC Specialist Investment Funds (OEIC)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American Index Retail Acc ‡@	892.36	...	-8.31	1.01
American Index Retail Inc ‡@	718.88	...	-6.66	1.01
Asian Gth Acc ‡@	147.77	...	-0.07	...
Asian Gth Inc ‡@	130.99	...	-0.06	...
Chinese Eq Acc ‡@	513.81	...	+0.27	0.40
Chinese Eq Inc ‡@	434.76	...	+0.22	0.34
Euro Gth Acc ‡@	973.97	...	+4.05	...
Euro Gth Inc ‡@	817.05	...	+3.39	...

IGNIS ASSET MGMT
Dlg: 0141 222 8282

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American Gth Inc @	322.55	340.42	-3.34	...
Balanced Growth @	262.17	276.69	-0.93	1.52
Balanced Growth Acc @	393.13	414.92	-1.40	1.49
Corporate Bond ‡@	99.69	...	-0.89	4.77
European Growth @	403.88	426.26	-3.57	...
European Growth Acc @	475.71	502.07	-4.21	...
Glob Gwth @	331.53	349.90	-3.09	0.12
Higher Yield @	83.98	88.64	-0.29	4.43
Higher Yield Acc @	275.04	290.28	-0.92	4.32
Japan @	49.06	51.78	-0.03	...
Managed @	130.89	138.15	-0.06	0.66
Managed Trust @	71.96	76.96	+0.17	...
Mngd Pfolio Inc @	95.54	100.84	-0.11	...
Pacific Grth @	498.71	526.34	-2.81	1.34
Smaller Comp @	756.24	798.14	+1.64	...
Smaller Cos @	628.94	663.79	+1.36	0.21

INSIGHT INVESTMENT FDS MANAGEMENT LTD
Client Servs: 0207 163 4000
Insight Investment Multi-Manager Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Well Bldr Bal Acc ‡@	96.05	...	-0.32	...
Well Bldr Gwth Acc ‡@	93.79	...	-0.36	...

INVESCO FUND MGRS LTD
Dling: 0800 085 8571 Inv Serv: 0800 085 8677
Brkr Serv: 0800 028 2121
INVESCO Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Str Inc N/Trl ‡@	323.57	...	-0.12	7.05

INVESCO PERPETUAL Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Childrens Acc ‡@	441.03	...	-0.77	...
Corp Bond Acc ‡@	197.15	...	+0.04	1.24
High Income Inc ‡@	313.65	...	-0.45	3.22
Income & Grth Inc ‡@	406.59	...	+0.92	1.68
Income Inc ‡@	1228.72	...	-3.19	3.48
Money Acc ‡@	91.63	...	-0.01	0.47
Monthly Inc Plus Inc ‡@	92.18	...	-0.01	...
UK Aggressive Inc ‡@	154.28	...	-0.24	3.15
UK Growth Acc ‡@	858.14	...	-2.98	...
UK Sml Cos Eqty Acc ‡@	1335.37	...	-19.26	0.34
UK Sml Cos Gwth ‡@	82.54	...	+0.04	...

INVESTEC FUND MGRS
Broker Support and Dealing: 020 7597 1900
OEIC Series i,ii,iii, & iv

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American A Acc ‡@	629.49	...	-5.77	...
Asia ex Japan A Acc ‡@	717.36	...	-12.47	...
Capital Accumulator A Acc ‡@	231.48	...	-3.81	...
Cautious Managed A Acc ‡@	375.15	...	-1.04	...
Cautious Managed A Inc ‡@	236.93	...	-0.66	...
Diversified Growth A Acc ‡@	130.41	...	-0.89	0.61
Diversified Growth A Inc ‡@	138.09	...	-0.95	...
Diversified Income A Acc ‡@	315.89	...	-0.70	2.55
Diversified Income A Inc ‡@	67.79	...	-0.15	4.03
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Acc ‡@	110.92	...	+0.08	4.34
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Acc Gross ‡@	125.82	...	+0.20	...
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Inc ‡@	64.58	...	+0.05	6.29
Emerging Mkts Equity A Acc ‡@	146.62	...	-1.17	0.93
Emrg Mkts Local Curr Debt A Acc ‡@	176.80	...	+0.99	4.52
Emrg Mkts Local Curr Debt A Inc ‡@	69.76	...	+0.39	4.78
Emrg Mkts Local Curr Debt Gross I Acc ‡@	220.49	...	-0.05	...

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Enhanced Natural Resources A Acc ‡@	134.24	...	-1.25	...
Global Bond A Acc ‡@	139.30	...	+4.03	0.82
Global Bond A Inc ‡@	109.33	...	+3.00	0.82
Global Bond I Gross Inc ‡@	1167.00	...	+29.78	1.25
Global Dynamic A Acc ‡@	193.61	...	+1.95	0.47
Global Energy A Acc ‡@	170.97	...	-1.14	...
Global Equity A Acc ‡@	231.71	...	-1.57	0.43
Global Franchise A Acc ‡@	299.23	...	-1.98	...
Global Free Enterprise A Acc ‡@	1151.97	...	-6.07	...
Global Gold A Acc ‡@	180.40	...	-0.65	...
Global Special Situations A Acc ‡@	303.56	...	-2.11	...
Global Special Situations A Inc ‡@	234.80	...	-1.64	...
Managed Growth A Acc ‡@	287.23	...	-2.08	...
Monthly High Income A Acc ‡@	243.45	...	+0.43	3.54
Monthly High Income A Inc ‡@	63.17	...	+0.01	5.01
Multi-Asset Protector A Acc ‡@	166.03	...	-0.22	...
Strategic Bond A Acc ‡@	244.54	...	+0.19	...
Strategic Bond A Inc ‡@	119.47	...	+0.09	...
Target Return A Acc ‡@	102.03	...	+0.44	0.82
Target Return A Inc ‡@	87.63	...	+0.01	0.87
UK Alpha A Acc ‡@	2544.35	...	-8.38	2.08
UK Blue Chip A Acc ‡@	770.11	...	+3.15	...
UK Smaller Companies A Acc ‡@	4600.07	...	-54.12	...
UK Smaller Companies A Inc ‡@	4125.98	...	-48.54	...
UK Special Situations A Acc ‡@	1249.82	...	-8.98	1.74
UK Special Situations A Inc ‡@	448.03	...	-3.21	1.78

For ISIS Asset Mgmt see F&C Fd Mgmt Ltd (OEICS)

JANUS HENDERSON INVESTORS
Investors Serv: 0800 832 832 Dlng: 0845 946 4646

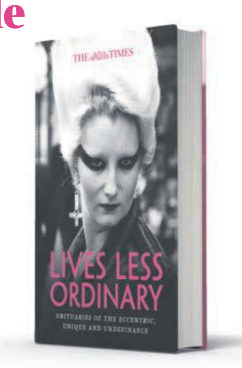
	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
All Stks Credit A Inc ‡@	115.50	...	-0.10	1.75
Asian Div Inc U Trst Inc ‡@	79.55	...	-0.51	5.79
Cautious Man Fd A Acc ‡@	279.80	...	-0.70	...
Cautious Man Fd A Inc ‡@	138.80	...	-0.40	...
China Opp Fund A Acc ‡@	1182.00	...	-25.00	...
Emg Mkts Opps Fd A Acc ‡@	191.50	...	-2.40	...
Erpn Grth Fund A Acc ‡@	280.60	...	-1.00	1.25
Erpn Sel Opps Fd A Acc ‡@	2109.00	...	-10.00	1.25
Fix Int Mnthly Inc Fd Acc ‡@	28.67	...	+0.07	5.11
Global Equity Fund Acc ‡@	4319.00	...	-18.00	...
Global Equity Income A Inc ‡@	65.38	...	-0.21	3.32
Global Tech A Acc ‡@	2654.00	...	-46.00	...
Instl UK Idx Opps A Acc ‡@	111.75	...	-0.51	2.91
M-Asset Abs Ret A Acc ‡@	161.10	...	-0.50	...
M-Man Active Fd A Acc ‡@	251.50	...	-0.80	...
M-Man Inc Grth A Inc ‡@	145.70	...	-0.50	...
M-Man Inc Grth Fd A Acc ‡@	186.10	...	-0.60	...
Sterling Bond U Trst Acc ‡@	205.40	...	-0.10	1.45
Sterling Bond U Trst Inc ‡@	56.37	...	-0.04	1.46
Strategic Bond A Inc ‡@	106.00	...	+0.40	3.37
UK Abs Ret Fd A Acc ‡@	164.90	...	...	...
UK Alpha Fund A Acc ‡@	133.60	...	-1.20	1.16
UK Irsh Sm Co Fd A Acc ‡@	742.50	...	-1.70	...
UK Property A Acc @	264.95	278.15	+0.01	2.63
UK Property A Inc @	105.80	111.07	...	2.68
US Growth Fund A Acc ‡@	1614.00	...	-16.00	...

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JP MORGAN ASSET MGMT
OEIC

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Asia A Acc ‡@	259.00	...	+2.20	...
Emerging Mkts ‡@	261.50	...	+3.00	...
Eur Dyn (ex-UK) A Acc ‡@	270.30	...	+4.70	0.47
Euro Smllr Cos ‡@	864.00	...	+17.40	...
Europe A Acc ‡@	1734.00	...	+35.00	1.35
Gbl Hi Yld Bd A Acc ‡@	117.30	...	+1.10	5.30
Gbl Hi Yld Bd A Inc ‡@	30.89	...	+0.29	5.45
Gl ex-UK Bd A Acc ‡@	257.40	...	-0.70	...
Gl ex-UK Bd A Inc ‡@	196.80	...	-0.50	...
Glb Fins A Acc ‡@	1077.00	...	+1.00	1.03
Global A Acc ‡@	2049.00	...	+11.00	...
Japan A Acc ‡@	516.80	...	+6.20	...
Multi-Man Tst A Acc ‡@	1268.00	...	+16.00	...
Multi-Man Tst A Inc ‡@	1127.00	...	+15.00	...
Nat Resources ‡@	951.20	...	+17.30	...
New Europe A ‡@	155.70	...	+12.00	2.11
Portfolio ‡@	295.60	...	+0.40	0.98
Stg Corp Bd A Acc ‡@	85.59	...	-0.13	1.14
Stg Corp Bd A Inc ‡@	48.30	...	-0.08	1.14
UK Act 350 A Acc ‡@	199.00	...	-2.20	...
UK Dynamic Acc ‡@	206.70	...	+4.30	...
UK Dynamic Inc ‡@	148.20	...	+3.10	...
UK Equity A Acc ‡@	401.90	...	+0.60	3.45
UK Equity A Inc ‡@	46.44	...	+0.07	3.49
UK Eqy & Bd Inc Acc ‡@	167.10	...	-0.20	...
UK Eqy & Bd Inc Inc ‡@	90.29	...	-0.48	...

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Higher Inc A Acc ‡@	1132.00	...	+7.00	...
UK Higher Inc A Inc ‡	531.30	...	+2.00	...
UK Sm Cos A Acc ‡@	563.30	...	+7.00	0.34
UK Str Eq Inc A Acc ‡@	197.90	...	+3.50	...
UK Str Eq Inc A Inc ‡@	100.50	...	+1.77	...
US A Acc ‡@	1036.00	...	+25.00	...
US Sm Cos A Acc ‡@	976.20	...	+14.00	...

JUPITER UT MGRS LTD
020 7581 3020

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Absolute Return ‡@	32.58	...	-0.02	0.11
Distribution and Growth ‡@	94.03	...	-0.37	2.09
Emg Euro Opps ‡@	145.34	...	-31.23	...
Euro Special Sits ‡@	421.74	...	-3.26	...
European ‡@	2697.25	...	-18.90	...
Financial Opps ‡@	691.88	...	-2.07	0.20
Income Trust ‡@	498.68	...	-1.91	4.07
Merlin Bal (Acc) ‡@	226.56	...	-0.12	...
Merlin Gwth (Acc) ‡	520.57	...	-4.35	...
Merlin Inc (Acc) ‡@	336.40	...	-1.76	...
Merlin Wwide (Inc) ‡	366.62	...	-3.05	...
UK Growth ‡@	249.05	...	-0.96	...
UK Special Sits (Inc) ‡@	198.12	...	-0.70	2.02

LEGAL & GENERAL (UT MGRS) LTD
Enquiries: 0870 050 0955 Dealing: 0870 050 0956

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Equity Acc @	2616.00	2639.00	-8.00	2.12
Equity Dist @	893.80	902.00	-2.70	2.15
Euro Ind Acc ‡@	491.10	...	-2.90	2.32
Euro Ind Inc ‡@	321.70	...	-2.00	2.37
Fixed Int Acc ‡@	131.00	...	-0.20	1.92
Fixed Int Dist ‡@	61.54	...	-0.07	1.94
Glob Gwth Acc @	243.90	243.90	-1.30	...
Glob Health Acc ‡@	111.40	...	-0.20	0.66
Glob Tech Acc ‡@	81.78	...	-1.80	0.09
Gwth Tst Acc @	106.00	106.50	-1.00	...
High Inc Acc ‡@	121.10	...	-0.30	5.37
Japan Ind Acc ‡@	66.13	...	-0.40	1.79
Pacific Ind Acc ‡@	196.00	...	-0.90	3.00
UK 100 Ind Acc @	180.90	180.90	+0.90	3.19
UK Active Opps Acc @	249.90	252.90	-0.10	...
UK Index Acc ‡@	338.00	...	-1.20	3.09
UK Index Dist ‡@	162.80	...	-0.60	3.17
US Ind Acc ‡@	786.40	...	-9.90	0.71
Worldwide Acc ‡@	328.70	...	-2.30	0.74

M & G SECURITIES
Enq: 0800 390 390 Dealing Line: 0800 328 3196
Authorised Inv Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Charifund Inc ‡	1465.60	...	-1.40	...

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 1

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Euro Smlr Cos Acc ‡	525.29	...	-3.39	...
Euro Smlr Cos Inc ‡	462.50	...	-3.00	0.69

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 2

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Extra Income Inc ‡	692.96	...	-0.33	...
Gilt & Fxd Int Inc ‡	79.25	...	-0.26	1.42
Gl Hi Yd Bd Inc ‡	39.31	...	-0.10	5.80
Index Linked Bd Inc ‡	118.39	...	-1.03	...
Index Trckr Inc ‡	74.34	...	-0.35	3.60
Short Dated Corp Bd Inc ‡	24.72	...	+0.01	...
UK Select A Inc ‡	2701.98	...	-34.61	2.31

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 3

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bd A Inc ‡	34.05	...	-0.05	3.23
Dividend Inc ‡	54.19	...	-0.06	...
Recovery A Inc ‡	106.23	...	-0.97	3.01
Sml Cos Inc ‡	342.86	...	-4.59	2.07

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 4

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Episode Allocation A Inc ‡@	134.97	...	-0.66	2.64

MARKS & SPENCER UNIT TRUST LTD
0808 005 5555

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
High Income	87.16	87.16	-0.07	4.63
High Income Acc	241.40	241.40	-0.20	4.31
UK 100 Comp Acc @	446.20	446.20	-2.80	3.10
UK 100 Cos @	221.10	221.10	-1.30	3.18
UK Select Pflo @	326.80	326.80	-1.40	3.15
UK Selection Port Acc @	676.20	676.20	-2.90	1.37
Worldwide Mgd Acc @	929.20	929.20	-5.10	1.03
Wwide Mgd @	546.60	546.60	-3.00	1.04

MORGAN STANLEY INVESTMENT MGMT LTD
Enquires: 0800 0961 962
The Morgan Stanley Funds (UK)
Class A Shares
Equity

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Dev Opp Fund F Acc ‡@	760.06	...	-4.26	...
Dev Opp Fund I Acc ‡@	756.47	...	-4.26	...
Glob Bal Inc F F Acc ‡@	917.07	...	-2.66	5.53
Glob Bal Inc F F Inc ‡@	857.87	...	-2.49	5.73
Glob Bal Inc F I Acc ‡@	915.99	...	-2.66	5.55
Glob Bal Inc F I Inc ‡@	856.71	...	-2.49	5.75
Glob Bal Sust F F Acc ‡@	926.91	...	-2.30	1.24
Glob Bal Sust F F Inc ‡@	913.15	...	-2.27	1.25
Glob Bal Sust F I Acc ‡@	925.80	...	-2.30	1.17
Glob Bal Sust F I Inc ‡@	912.94	...	-2.26	1.18
Glob Br Eq Inc Fund F Inc ‡@	1289.66	...	-7.65	4.27
Glob Br Eq Inc Fund I Acc ‡@	1767.79	...	-10.50	4.23
Glob Br Eq Inc Fund I Inc ‡@	1381.26	...	-8.21	4.35
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡@	1511.39	...	-16.59	1.04
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡@	13243.96	...	-82.68	0.95
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡@	1447.86	...	-15.89	1.05
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡@	3639.25	...	-22.72	0.96
Glob Ins Fund F Acc ‡@	482.59	...	-6.49	...
Glob Ins Fund F Inc ‡@	482.59	...	-6.49	...
Glob Ins Fund I Acc ‡@	480.67	...	-6.46	...
Glob Ins Fund I Inc ‡@	480.67	...	-6.46	...
Glob Sust Fund F Acc (PH) ‡@	1105.29	...	-15.60	0.99
Glob Sust Fund F Inc ‡@	1200.56	...	-11.42	0.92
Glob Sust Fund I Acc ‡@	1215.29	...	-11.56	0.72
Glob Sust Fund I Acc (PH) ‡@	1104.86	...	-15.60	0.78
Glob Sustain Fund F Acc ‡@	1221.36	...	-11.61	0.91
Stg Corp Bond F F Acc ‡@	119.27	...	-0.18	3.07
Stg Corp Bond F F Inc ‡@	94.73	...	-0.14	3.12
Stg Corp Bond F I Acc ‡@	2537.40	...	-3.70	3.39
Stg Corp Bond F I Inc ‡@	1346.03	...	-1.96	3.47
Sust Fixed Inc Opps F F Acc ‡@	919.16	...	+0.03	2.22
Sust Fixed Inc Opps F F Inc ‡@	888.53	...	+0.03	2.25
Sust Fixed Inc Opps F I Acc ‡@	915.50	...	+0.02	2.01
Sust Fixed Inc Opps F I Inc ‡@	888.17	...	+0.03	2.04
US Adv F F Acc ‡@	1299.93	...	-26.52	...
US Adv F F Acc (PH) ‡@	724.71	...	-19.07	...
US Adv F I Acc ‡@	1383.88	...	-28.25	...
US Adv F I Acc (PH) ‡@	759.79	...	-20.00	...

SANTANDER UNIT TST MGRS
08457 413002

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Bal Pfolio Inc ‡@	110.50	...	+0.40	...
Bal Port Gwth Acc ‡@	229.20	...	-0.50	1.20
Equity Inc Inc ‡@	196.80	...	-1.90	5.46
N&P UK Gwth Inc ‡@	182.80	...	+0.10	3.09
Stkmkt 100 Tkr @	256.10	256.10	-1.20	3.19
UK Growth Acc ‡@	443.10	...	-4.40	3.14
UK Growth Inc ‡@	236.70	...	-2.30	3.22

SCOTTISH MUTUAL INV MNGRS LTD
0141 248 6100

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
European Inc	1777.00	1873.48	+4.40	...
Far Eastern Inc	584.69	617.09	-0.73	1.42
Intl Growth Inc	380.56	400.59	+0.02	0.75
Japanese Inc	41.85	41.85	+0.43	...
Mutual European	2762.93	2908.99	-21.63	...
Mutual Far Eastern	937.96	989.93	-15.51	0.90
Mutual North Am	1983.00	2092.88	+6.23	0.24
Mutual UK Eq	1385.44	1462.21	-6.27	2.83
Nth American Inc	1227.65	1295.67	-7.28	...
UK Equity Inc	544.45	574.62	-2.30	3.18

SCOTTISH WIDOWS UNIT TRUST MGRS
0845 300 2244
Authorised Inv Funds (OEICs)
OEIC A Class
Managed Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Bal Port A Acc ‡@	237.60	...	+0.80	0.01
Caut Port A Acc ‡@	207.10	...	+0.30	...
Caut Port A Inc ‡@	152.00	...	+0.30	...
Opps Port A Acc ‡@	280.20	...	+1.30	...
Prog Port A Acc ‡@	266.60	...	+1.10	...

Overseas Growth Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Eur Sel Gth A Acc ‡@	3290.00	...	-18.00	0.49

Tracker and Specialist Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Trkr A Acc ‡@	373.70	...	-2.40	3.16
UK Trkr A Inc ‡@	187.40	...	-1.20	3.24

UK and Income Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bond A Acc ‡@	283.10	...	-1.60	2.14
Corp Bond A Inc ‡@	105.40	...	-0.70	2.16
Envir Invtr A Acc ‡@	378.60	...	-0.80	1.34
Hi Inc Bond A Ac ‡@	228.00	...	-0.50	5.27
Hi Inc Bond A Inc ‡@	68.38	...	-0.15	5.42
Hi Res A Acc ‡@	371.80	...	-1.70	4.20
Hi Res A Inc ‡@	116.00	...	-0.60	4.30
Safety Plus A Acc ‡@	40.49	...	...	...
Strat Inc A Acc ‡@	186.30	...	+0.10	3.10
Strat Inc A Inc ‡@	82.48	...	+0.08	3.24
UK Gwth A Acc ‡@	189.70	...	-1.50	3.25
UK Sel Gwth A Acc ‡@	2164.00	...	-31.00	2.41

OEIC B Class
Tracker and Specialist Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Trkr B Acc ‡@	412.50	...	-2.60	3.25
UK Trkr B Inc ‡@	186.30	...	-1.20	3.34

UK and Income Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bond B Acc ‡@	370.70	...	+0.90	...
Corp Bond B Inc ‡@	136.30	...	+0.30	...
UK Gwth B Acc ‡@	205.60	...	-0.30	1.79
UK Sel Gwth B Acc ‡@	2481.00	...	...	1.09

OEIC C Class
UK and Income Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Gth C Inc ‡@	126.20	...	-1.00	3.82
UK Sel Gwth C Acc ‡@	2598.00	...	...	1.29

STANDARD LIFE INVESTMENTS
0845 279 3003
Investment Funds (OEIC) - Retail Shares

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
AAA Inc CAT Acc ‡@	88.81	...	-0.03	1.24
AAA Inc CAT Inc ‡@	49.95	...	-0.02	1.25
AAA Income Acc ‡@	96.62	...	-0.03	1.67
Amer Eq Gth Acc ‡@	208.40	...	-1.80	...
Corp Bond Acc ‡@	154.80	...	-0.20	3.09
Corp Bond Inc ‡@	51.86	...	-0.05	...
Euro Eq Gth Acc ‡@	238.80	...	-1.90	0.27
Glb Advtg CAT Acc ‡@	147.10	...	-0.70	...
Glob Advtg Acc ‡@	194.30	...	-0.90	...
Glob Eq Uncstrd Acc ‡@	154.20	...	-0.80	...
Higher Inc Acc ‡@	140.60	...	-0.10	4.39
Higher Inc Inc ‡@	43.81	...	-0.06	4.49
Japan Eq Gth Acc ‡@	127.40	...	...	...
Managed Acc ‡@	359.70	...	-2.60	0.41
Select Inc Acc ‡@	91.51	...	...	2.21
Select Inc Inc ‡@	51.26	...	-0.26	2.21
UK Eq Gth Acc ‡@	358.20	...	-2.80	1.88
UK Eq Hi Alpha ‡@	220.90	...	-1.70	...
UK Eq Hi Inc Acc ‡@	267.80	...	-1.80	...
UK Eq Hi Inc Inc ‡@	73.67	...	-0.51	...
UK Ethical Acc ‡@	192.60	...	-2.00	1.43
UK Opps Acc ‡@	231.70	...	-2.70	0.62
UK Opps Inc ‡@	209.30	...	-2.40	0.62
UK Smlr Cos Acc ‡@	785.30	...	-9.30	...

SVS BROWN SHIPLEY FUNDS
Enquiries:0141 222 1151

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Balanced A Acc ‡@	131.46	...	-0.93	0.77
Balanced A Inc ‡@	117.62	...	-0.83	0.77
Cautious A Acc ‡@	109.64	...	-0.36	1.28
Cautious A Inc ‡@	95.08	...	-0.32	1.29
Dynamic A Acc ‡@	320.58	...	-2.93	...
Dynamic A Inc ‡@	289.59	...	-2.64	...
Growth A Acc ‡@	330.00	...	-2.60	...
Income A Acc ‡@	241.71	...	-1.24	...
Sterling Bond Acc ‡@	242.37	...	-0.28	...
Sterling Bond Inc ‡@	97.00	...	-0.11	...

THREADNEEDLE INVESTMENTS
Client Serv: 0800 0683000
Intermediary Serv: 0800 0684000
Institutional Shares (Class 2) (500000 GBP)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Threadneedle UK Eq Opps Ins Inc ‡@	120.06	...	+0.01	1.56

Retail Shares (Class 1)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Threadneedle HY Bd Rtl Inc ‡@	36.36	...	-0.03	4.17
Threadneedle Mthly Etr Inc Rtl Inc ‡@	78.53	...	+0.09	...
Threadneedle SterlingCorpBd Ins Inc ‡@	54.16	...	-0.02	2.12
Threadneedle SterlingCorpBd Rtl Inc ‡@	54.05	...	-0.02	1.75
Threadneedle Stg Bd Ret Inc ‡@	46.47	...	-0.11	1.30
Threadneedle Strat Bd Ret ‡@	41.02	...	-0.02	3.13
Threadneedle UK Eq Inc Rtl Inc ‡@	96.74	...	+0.13	3.46
Threadneedle UK Growth & Inc Rtl Inc ‡@	89.70	...	+0.08	2.70
Threadneedle UK Insti Rtl ‡@	175.73	...	-0.38	1.82
Threadneedle UK Mthly Inc Rtl Inc ‡@	67.82	...	-0.08	...
Threadneedle UK Rtl Inc ‡@	128.89	...	-0.25	1.49
Threadneedle UK Smaller Coms Rtl Inc ‡@	336.58	...	-3.15	...

For Resolution see Ignis

TU FUND MANAGERS LIMITED

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
British	884.00	884.00	-7.00	0.35
European	210.70	219.40	+1.00	...

* Yield expressed as CAR (Compound Annual Return); † Ex dividend; ‡Middle price; . . . No significant data. # Periodic charge deducted from capital; @ Exit charge

British funds

Index-linked

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/–	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
125.79	119.17	Tr IL 1⅞% 22	123.94	– .29	1.56	–1.06
389.95	359.04	Tr IL 2½% 24 *	378.32	+ .18	1.43	–0.81
111.98	100.58	Tr IL 0⅛% 24	103.83	– .05	...	–2.78
120.56	96.90	Tr IL 0⅛% 26	103.66	+ .04	...	–0.97
135.63	99.85	Tr IL 1¼% 27	109.99	+ .12	1.24	–0.73
130.64	93.33	Tr IL 0⅛% 28	104.41	+ .14	...	–0.64
132.52	92.36	Tr IL 0⅛% 29	104.34	+ .21	...	–0.55
141.65	90.61	Tr IL 0⅛% 31	106.62	+ .31	...	–0.62
402.06	301.39	Tr IL 4⅛% 30 *	347.36	+ .95	1.86	–0.27
161.90	99.08	Tr IL 1¼% 32	117.94	+ .25	1.06	–0.50
160.29	92.56	Tr IL 0¾% 34	112.38	+ .20	...	–0.33
324.74	206.76	Tr IL 2% 35 *	253.16	+ .52	0.96	–0.08
161.43	82.01	Tr IL 0⅛% 36	104.05	+ .01	...	–0.16
186.89	94.08	Tr IL 1⅛% 37	118.48	– .01	1.00	–0.10
169.23	78.25	Tr IL 0⅛% 39	101.53	– .09	...	0.03
186.19	84.60	Tr IL 0⅝% 40	109.54	– .15	...	0.07
180.47	75.20	Tr IL 0⅛% 41	100.56	– .22	...	0.09
199.71	82.66	Tr IL 0⅝% 42	110.20	– .25	0.57	0.11
188.68	72.26	Tr IL 0⅛% 44	98.40	– .40	...	0.20
196.57	70.25	Tr IL 0⅛% 46	97.08	– .52	...	0.25
229.02	80.78	Tr IL 0¾% 47	111.37	– .65	0.69	0.28
208.26	66.79	Tr IL 0⅛% 48	95.89	– .70	...	0.29
231.84	72.64	Tr IL 0½% 50	106.07	– .74	...	0.27
230.36	65.69	Tr IL 0¼% 52	100.47	– .85	...	0.23
304.28	88.77	Tr IL 1¼% 55	133.22	–1.14	1.03	0.21
246.36	60.50	Tr IL 0⅛% 56	98.67	–1.03	...	0.17
254.08	60.14	Tr IL 0⅛% 58	98.53	– .92	...	0.17
293.39	64.93	Tr IL 0⅜% 62	109.93	– .92	...	0.12
305.21	55.87	Tr IL 0⅛% 65	102.90	– .87	...	0.06
330.42	54.65	Tr IL 0⅛% 68	103.87	–1.26	...	0.04
389.48	55.40	Tr IL 0⅛% 73	112.99	–1.85	...	–0.13

Longs (Over 15 years)

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/–	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
145.94	94.91	Tr 4¼% 36	109.63	+ .24	3.88	3.34
112.70	67.54	Tr 1¾% 37	80.55	+ .11	...	3.44
162.05	98.36	Tr 4¾% 38	115.58	+ .15	4.11	3.47
103.53	58.05	Tr 1⅛% 39	70.97	+ .10	...	3.49
155.95	92.08	Tr 4¼% 39	109.16	+ .12	3.89	3.52
159.16	91.30	Tr 4¼% 40	109.25	+ .02	...	3.55
106.42	54.72	Tr 1¼% 41	69.26	+ ...	...	3.49
147.71	76.78	Tr 3¼% 44	95.40	– .08	...	3.56
169.96	93.79	Tr 4½% 42	113.90	+ ...	3.95	3.53
154.93	79.61	Tr 3½% 45	99.22	– .11	...	3.55
175.82	89.35	Tr 4¼% 46	111.54	– .20	3.81	3.53
99.79	43.93	Tr 0⅞% 46	58.49	– .10	...	3.51
114.76	51.06	Tr 1½% 47	66.81	– .20	...	3.53
122.26	53.78	Tr 1¾% 49	70.40	– .23	...	3.49
185.65	89.75	Tr 4¼% 49	112.58	– .30	3.78	3.52
95.59	35.82	Tr 0⅝% 50	50.09	– .15	...	3.42
219.56	63.35	Tr 0⅛% 51	96.33	– .81	...	0.26
111.21	44.40	Tr 1¼% 51	60.09	– .25	...	3.46
180.27	82.51	Tr 3¾% 52	105.09	– .38	...	3.47
120.44	46.78	Tr 1½% 53	63.61	– .27	...	3.43
124.61	48.25	Tr 1⅝% 54	65.77	– .35	...	3.39
205.69	90.79	Tr 4¼% 55	116.61	– .57	3.64	3.41
132.79	49.39	Tr 1¾% 57	68.81	– .65	...	3.26
213.01	87.32	Tr 4% 60	115.72	– .96	...	3.27
96.16	26.21	Tr 0½% 61	42.18	– .62	...	3.05
173.16	60.88	Tr 2½% 65	85.16	– .92	...	3.13
219.03	79.01	Tr 3½% 68	108.48	–1.19	...	3.15
149.85	42.99	Tr 1⅝% 71	65.11	– .99	...	2.99

Mediums (5-15 years)

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/–	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
100.82	97.34	Tr 0¾% 23	98.57	+ .03	...	3.08
103.36	98.04	Tr 2¼% 23	99.15	+ .01	...	3.41
99.44	94.34	Tr 0⅛% 24	96.46	+ .02	...	3.29
101.61	94.79	Tr 1% 24	97.02	+ .01	...	3.24
106.44	96.82	Tr 2¾% 24	98.98	+ .01	...	3.36
114.71	100.77	Tr 5% 25	103.84	+ .05	4.82	3.21
100.93	90.15	Tr 0⅝% 25	94.05	+ .06	...	3.12
105.86	93.15	Tr 2% 25	96.94	+ .06	...	3.17
98.77	86.33	Tr 0⅛% 26	91.27	+ .09	...	3.06
104.87	89.28	Tr 1½% 26	94.42	+ .10	...	3.14
104.30	85.65	Tr 1¼% 27	91.78	+ .16	...	3.18
121.98	98.23	Tr 4¼% 27	104.87	+ .18	4.05	3.19
97.74	79.15	Tr 0⅛% 28	85.76	+ .20	...	3.14
107.51	84.72	Tr 1⅝% 28	92.22	+ .24	...	3.08
137.51	107.13	Tr 6% 28	114.98	+ .27	5.22	3.23
99.47	77.61	Tr 0½% 29	85.11	+ .22	...	3.19
102.36	78.21	Tr 0⅞% 29	86.61	+ .32	...	3.05
97.81	72.39	Tr 0⅜% 30	81.25	+ .17	...	3.07
136.04	101.89	Tr 4¾% 30	112.18	+ .19	4.23	3.02
95.84	69.25	Tr 0¼% 31	78.54	+ .14	...	3.10
102.46	73.06	Tr 1% 32	83.12	+ .13	...	3.14
135.62	98.13	Tr 4¼% 32	109.84	+ .17	3.87	3.05
101.40	68.57	Tr 0⅞% 33	79.18	+ .17	...	3.20
144.81	98.89	Tr 4½% 34	112.64	+ .20	4.00	3.20
96.74	61.24	Tr 0⅝% 35	72.54	+ .17	...	3.30

Shorts (under 5 years)

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/–	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
99.93	98.87	Tr 0⅛% 23	99.59	+ .01	...	2.91
99.37	90.04	Tr 0¼% 25	93.42	+ .09	...	3.46
99.30	84.28	Tr 0⅜% 26	89.86	+ .12	...	3.18

* maturities having an eight-month indexation lag.

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Business Equity prices

Dividend yields Please note dividend yields are supplied by Morningstar. The yield is the sum of a company's trailing 12-month dividend payments divided by the last month's ending share price

12 month high and low Please note the 12 month high and low figures for shares supplied by Morningstar are based on intra-day figures, not closing prices.

Automobiles & parts

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
541½	89½	Aston Martin Lag	135	+ 3¼	...	-0.8

Banking & finance

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
252¾	133	abrdn	194⅝	- 7⅜	7.5	4.2
3266	1729	**Admiral**	1993	- 9	7.6	10.1
85	37½	ADVFN♦	37½	...	4.0	6.5
388	246⅛	AJ Bell	361⅜	- 7½	1.9	33.8
27195⅞	20257⅝	Aon Corpn	25217¾	- 36	0.5	61.5
42	21½	Appreciate Group♦	41¼	- ¼	2.4	17.9
1030	645	Arbuthnot Bkg♦	820	...	1.9	18.1
20	11	Argo Group♦	11	...	...	5.0
300½	180⅞	Ashmore Gp‡	216⅛	- 3¾	7.8	7.3
1583½	1165⅜	Aus New Z	1325	- 19¼	6.1	10.3
602⅞	373¾	**Aviva**	443⅛	- 1	4.8	58.3
290⅞	193⅜	Banco Santander	240⅜	- 1¾	2.6	5.7
2630	986	Bank of Georgia	2630	- 5	...	8.1
217	135⅝	**Barclays**	157⅜	- 1¼	1.9	3.8
½	⅛	Blue Star Capital♦	⅛	...	...	2.6
359	277	BP Marsh&Ptnrs♦	297	...	0.8	8.1
39	7⅞	Braveheart Inv♦	8⅝	...	...	0.2
517	266	Brewin Dolphin	515	+ 1	2.8	28.1
505	173⅞	Bridgepoint	189	- 7⅝	...	11.8
82	40	Cenkos Secs♦	45½	...	7.6	9.2
325	256½	Chesnara	289½	- 6	7.6	16.0
68	31	City of Lon Gp♦	51¼	+ 2¼	...	-3.5
530	343½	City Lon Inv Gp	428	- 7	7.7	10.0
1452	894	Close Bros	1055	- 2	5.6	7.8
317	211½	CMC Markets‡	227½	- 5½	13.4	6.9
787¼	482⅜	Commerzbk	669¼	- 8⅞	...	34.3
1236¼	649⅛	Deutsche Bk	858⅜	- 9⅛	...	10.0
312¼	177⅝	Direct Line Ins	208½	...	10.7	8.6
59½	57	Downing ONE VCT	57	...	4.3	7.7
1⅛	⅜	Drumz♦	⅞	...	...	-8.1
179¼	74⅛	EFG-Hermes Hldg	94¼	+ 11⅜	...	6.0
359	122½	EPE Special Opps♦	151	...	...	8.4
945¼	647⅞	FBD	945¼	...	...	4.2
72½	67½	Fiske♦	67½	...	...	12.0
83½	59	Frenkel Topping♦	74¼	...	1.8	43.1
761	458½	Georgia Capital	751	...	...	2.0
1005	710	Gresham House♦	740	...	0.8	29.7
506	265	H&T Group♦	506	+ 6	1.6	16.2
52	33	Hansard Global	40	...	11.1	13.7
1391	740¾	**Hargreaves L**	835	- 4⅛	4.6	14.8
194⅞	143⅜	Helios Under♦	157½	...	1.9	...
567⅛	429⅝	**HSBC**	493¾	- 4¾	3.2	10.7
847½	648	IG Group	802½	- 3½	5.3	8.1
1482	500	Impax♦	740	+ 20	1.4	24.4
2261	953⅛	**Intermed Cap**	1216½	+ 12½	4.6	6.9
142⅜	71⅞	IPF	75½	+ ½	2.9	4.2
173¾	136	Intl Public Pntshp	150	- ½	4.9	19.2
536¾	351½	Investec	483⅝	- 3⅛	2.6	12.1
320	253	Investment Co	253	- 2	0.4	9.0
123¾	52¾	IP Group	61⅝	- 1¼	1.6	2.3
300	94	Jarvis Securities♦‡	155	+ ½	8.7	11.1
265	83¾	Jupiter Fund Mgmt	129⅛	- 2⅜	13.2	4.8
95⅜	55⅞	Just Group	75	- 1⅛	...	...
605	346½	Lancashire Hdgs	602	- 3	1.9	...
307¾	204	**Legal & Gen**	253⅜	- 2⅝	7.0	7.7
49843⅞	502⅝	Liberty Group	502⅝	- 2⅝	...	...
2325	704	Liontrust	1056	- 14	4.4	13.2
62	39½	Livermore Invs♦	40½	...	8.7	2.6
55⅛	39	**Lloyds Bkg Gp**	46⅛	- ⅛	5.5	6.4
36½	29¼	LMS Capital	30½	...	2.9	13.2
8582	6370	**Lond Stk Ex Gp**	7888	+ 38	0.9	80.6
227¼	159⅞	**M&G**	184¼	- 2⅜	9.9	57.5
274⅞	178¾	Man	209½	- 1¾	4.0	8.4
17½	7½	Manx Fin♦	16½	...	1.0	8.3
3⅜	2	Marechale Cap♦	2	...	...	1.0
14567½	11766½	Marsh McLn	14157⅞	+ 57⅜	1.4	29.5
892½	530	Mattioli Woods♦	620	- 10	3.3	...
21¾	11¼	Metal Tiger♦	11½	...	...	4.4
104⅛	69	Metro Bank	99⅝	+ 1⅝	...	-0.6
1865⅜	1439	Nat Aust Bk	1690⅛	- 20⅞	2.8	16.7
283⅜	207⅝	**NWG**	258¼	- 2¼	4.0	10.1
343	170⅜	Numis♦	183½	+ 5⅜	6.5	3.7
599	375⅜	Onesavings Bank	461⅛	- 6⅜	4.2	6.1
691	513	PayPoint‡	513	- 3	6.2	16.0
14	¼	PCF Group♦	⅝	...	...	-0.3
701⅜	506¾	**Phoenix Gp**	605½	- 5¾	7.9	-7.0
366	136¼	Provident	190¼	- 5½	...	3.5
1337	797½	**Prudential**	1055	- 21½	1.1	17.1
3⅛	⅞	Quantum Blockchain♦	1⅜	+ ¼	...	-7.9
179½	82	Quilter	94⅜	- 3⅝	5.6	67.4
175⅜	61	Randall & Quilter♦	61	- 2	6.3	90.9
2210	1518	Rathbone Grp	2035	- 30	3.6	15.7
1⅜	½	RiverFort Global Opps♦	¾	...	2.6	2.2
1690	1370	Rockwood Strategic	1620	- 5	1.7	2.3
2830	1905	S & U	2100	- 20	4.2	9.9
2¾	1½	Sancus Lending Grp♦	1½	...	...	-0.7
60¾	40¾	Schroder REIT‡	44½	- 1¼	5.6	4.7
718¾	358¾	**Schroders**	454	- 4	25.5	2.0
1731½	920	**St James Place**	1138½	- 13½	5.3	21.6
638½	414	**Stand Chart**	584⅛	- 7½	1.5	13.1
15½	7¼	Starvest♦	7½	...	...	-1.2
33	22½	STM Group♦	29	...	4.8	11.1
4480⅜	3276	Sun Life Can	3817	+ 5⅜	3.5	9.7
10	3⅝	Tavistock Inv♦	7¾	...	0.6	1.2
2270	901	TBC Bank Group	2215	- 5	1.6	6.4
16¾	7	Tern♦	11¾	- ½	...	8.8
27	15¼	Time Finance♦	19	...	...	11.5
1300	900	Volvere♦	1115	...	...	...
51½	25	WH Ireland♦	27½	...	...	15.4
33½	27	Walker Crips Grp	29½	...	2.5	84.2
4814½	3051¼	Wells Fargo	3518¾	- 40⅛	1.6	9.6
1368½	1065⅜	Westpac	1299⅝	- 9⅞	3.6	17.6
30	21½	Worsley Investors Ltd	23⅜	...	...	73.1
40015⅝	33331⅞	Zurich Fincl	39303½	- 157⅛	4.1	15.3

Investment companies

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	Dis(-) or Pm
1477	1042	**3I Group**	1314½	+ 3	3.2	-9.7
368½	248¾	3i Infrastructure	327	- 2½	3.3	2.9
104½	83⅛	Abrdn Div I&G	95½	- ½	4.7	-18.0
1488	1066	Aberforth Smlr	1290	- 10	2.5	-11.3
1047¼	867¾	Alliance	944	- 6	2.3	-4.6
523	352	Asia Dragon Tr	414	- 2	1.3	-11.2
248	183½	Athelney Trust	210	...	4.5	-4.9
1088⅞	169	AVI Global Trust	189⅛	- 2½	1.5	-8.5
404½	206¼	Baillie Gifford Ch Gr	266½	+ ¼	1.6	-7.7
156	73½	Baillie Gifford Eu Gr	88	- 1¼	0.3	-12.1
1015¾	657	Baillie Gifford Jpn Tr	756	+ 1	1.1	-5.8
240⅝	131¼	Baillie Gifford SN	152⅜	+ ⅛	...	-8.7
246	139⅜	Baillie Gifford UK Gr	166¾	- ¾	2.0	-12.0
124½	90⅞	Bankers	98½	- 1	2.0	-8.2
5232	3610	BH Macro	4565	- 45	...	12.1
1217½	722¼	Biotech Growth	918	- 18	...	-4.9
151	95	BlckRck Com Inc	134½	- ¾	3.0	-2.1
140	114	BlckRck Fro Inv	128¾	- 1¼	3.7	-8.1
714	396	BlckRck Grt Euro	472	- 8	1.3	-3.8
206	164	BlckRck Inc & Gwth	196	+ 1	3.5	-4.7
457	323⅞	BlckRck Latin Am	379½	+ 2	4.9	-9.6
215	183¼	BlckRck Sustain American Inc	206	+ 1	3.6	-0.7
2140	1162	BlckRck Smlr	1318	- 18	2.4	-14.5
975⅝	477⅞	BlckRck Throgmorton	584	- 6	1.7	-4.7
804⅞	524	BlckRck Wld Min	669	- 12	6.4	-0.9
24¼	7¼	Blue Plan Int Fn#	9½	...	...	-13.1
340	256	BMO Cap&Inc	290	- 8	3.9	-1.8
124⅛	68½	BMO Comm Prop	91⅛	- 1⅞	3.3	-33.3
172¾	122	BMO Glbl Smaller	142	- 2¾	1.1	-10.5
520	375½	BMO Priv Eq Ord	439	- 9	3.3	-36.8
101	67⅜	BMO Real Estate	71¾	- ½	3.3	-41.0
95	71	BMO UK HIT	83½	...	6.1	-6.9
95	79	BMO UK HIT B	85	...	...	-5.3
376	294	BMO UK HIT UNIT	332	...	4.5	-7.5
1495	1072½	Brown Advsr US Smlr	1267½	+ 2½	...	-7.6
1135	888	Brunner	1020	...	1.8	-10.8
4075	3015	Caledonia Inv	3705	- 55	4.7	-25.0
191½	141	Invesco BondInc	163½	- 1½	6.9	1.2
427	363¼	City of Lon IT	405½	- 1½	5.0	1.3
123½	96	Crystal Amber Fd	101	- 1	23.2	-19.5
555	452¾	Dunedin Entp	503	- 7½	8.9	-6.9
653½	537	Edinburgh IT	629	- 8	3.8	-6.8
316⅝	154½	Edin Wwide	177¾	+ 1¾	...	-8.6
324¼	268	EP Global Opp	310½	- 5½	1.4	-11.7
142	74½	European Assets	91⅜	- ¾	8.9	-2.5
847	608	European Opp Tr	730	- 3	0.3	-12.4
942	767⅛	**F&C Investment Tr**	905	+ 2	1.4	-2.6
489	406⅛	Fidlty Asian Val	485	+ 1	2.7	-6.6
332	181⅞	Fidelity China Sp	234	- 3½	2.1	-9.1
384¼	256½	Fidlty Euro Val	316½	...	2.1	-6.3
246½	143	Fidlty Jap Tru	170½	- ¾	...	-7.4
311	232	Fidlty Spec Val	269	- 2	2.3	-6.5
925	731¾	Fins Gwth & Inc	853	- 7	1.9	-4.9
120⅛	85⅝	GCP Infrastructure	96⅜	...	5.8	-14.2
835	552⅝	Gen Emer Mkts	605	- 7	1.9	-11.4
55	28½	Gldn Prosp Prc Mtl	35½	+ 1¼	...	-8.3
168½	130⅜	Greencoat UK Wind	153	+ ½	5.9	-1.3
219⅞	166	Hansa Investment	179	...	1.0	-41.3
218⅞	170	Hansa Inv Co 'A'	172½	- 4	1.0	-42.1
2860	1986	Hbrvest Glbl Pt Eq	2190	- 20	...	-46.3
165½	120½	Hend Euro Foc	146¾	- 2¼	2.1	-10.1
185½	137¼	Hend High Inc	170	+ ¼	6.1	0.8
1242	674¼	Hend Smlr	805	- 13	2.6	-10.3
2510	1540	Herald	1774	+ 6	...	-16.5
457½	310	HgCapital Trust	358½	+ 1½	1.6	-20.5
184⅞	138⅞	HICL Infra	164½	...	5.0	0.4
286	216	Highbridge Tactical	235	...	...	-12.4
1300	928	ICG Ent Tr	1158	- 12	1.1	-36.9
570	370⅞	Impax Env Mkts	415½	- 2½	0.6	-1.5
366	280	Invesco Asia Tr	330½	- 2½	4.0	-10.1
191½	141	Invesco BondInc	163½	- 1½	6.9	1.2
176	111	IPST Bal	127½	+ ½	...	-17.5
250	200	IPST Gbl Eq	224	...	2.8	-10.0
102⅝	93	IPST Managed	96	...	0.9	-9.9
199⅞	141	IPST UK Eq	163½	- 1½	3.6	-10.1
620	373½	IP UKSmallerCos	423	- 15	1.7	-12.0
800	650	JPM American	694	- 6	0.9	-1.8
462	294½	JPM Asia	352¾	- 2¼	4.2	-9.5
546	246½	JPM Chinese	339¼	- 10¼	5.9	-5.1
778	610¼	JPM Claverhs	704	- 6	4.6	0.6
105	99	JPM Elect Mg C	103	...	0.2	-0.5
1115¼	886¼	JPM Elect Mg G	960	- 10	2.0	-1.6
111	88	JPM Elect Mg I	99½	...	4.6	-1.8
132⅛	91	JPM Em Mkts	106	- 1⅛	1.1	-8.2
548	339	JPM Euro disc	392½	- 3	1.5	-13.1
150⅛	108	JPM GEMI	123½	- 2	3.7	-8.8
474	386	JPM GG&I	421	- 6	3.7	-0.7
898	691¼	JPM Indian	848	- 6	...	-15.6
510	301	JPM Jap Sml Co	330½	- 1	4.4	-6.5
694	408½	JPM Japan#	466½	- 3½	1.0	-5.8
1375	735	JPM Mid Cap	883½	- 12½	2.9	-11.5
108¼	85¼	JPM Multi-Ass Grw & Inc	94½	...	4.3	-2.1
782	55⅛	JPMorgan Emerg E, ME & Africa Sec Plc	80½	- 1½	53.4	75.9
408	230	JPM Smllr Co	285½	- 7½	2.1	-8.0
323	174	Keystone IT	208	- 4	1.6	-11.6
829	649	Law Debenture	769	- 8	4.0	1.1
143¼	99	Lowland	119½	- 2½	4.8	-5.8
246	156¾	Majedie	191¾	+ 1¼	4.6	-21.7
432⅞	272⅛	M Currie Port	302	- 1	1.3	-1.4
121⅞	90	Marwyn Val In	95	...	5.3	-44.5
272	158¼	Mercantile IT	197⅜	- 3	3.1	-11.6
591	480	Merchants	556	- 5	5.0	1.5
870	639¾	Mid Wynd	709	- 1	1.4	1.7
1410	875	Monks Inv Tst	977	- 8	0.2	-7.7
221	104⅛	Montanaro Eur Sml	132⅜	- 2	0.6	-7.9
928	715	Murray Income Trust	827	- 8	4.0	-6.2
1352	1090	Murray Int	1306	- 12	4.2	0.6
90½	72⅝	Nb Global Floating	74	- ⅜	6.8	-7.2
370¼	286¼	Pacific Assets	359	- 1	0.4	-6.4
342½	229⅛	Pantheon Int	264	- 7½	...	-43.3
3125	2295	**Pershing Sq**	2830	- 40	0.8	-34.9
507	465½	Personal Assets	478	- ½	1.4	0.9
2751¼	1764	Polar Cap Tech	1826	- 24	...	-8.5
202	143⅛	Prem Glb & Inf	160	- 1¾	3.8	-10.4
148½	112½	Renewables Inf	130⅜	- ⅜	5.1	-2.3
2760	1928	RIT Cap Ptnr	2050	- 30	...	-14.0
750	456	Riverstone	648	- 42	...	-46.9
524	366½	Schroder TotRt	416½	- 3½	1.9	-4.0
610	446	Schrd Asia Pac	500	- 9	1.7	-11.1
319½	254½	Schrod Inc Gwth	298½	+ 1½	4.4	...
221	185⅞	Schrod Jap Gwth	202½	- 2½	2.1	-9.2
718	454	Schrod UKMid	537	- 3	2.6	-13.9
34½	14¾	Schroder UK PP Tr	15⅞	...	...	-49.0
546	434	Scot American	502	- 4	2.7	1.3
1461½	670½	**Scot Mtge**	758½	+ 2¾	0.4	-7.2
242	207	Secs Tst Scot	228	+ ½	2.6	0.2
107½	75½	Sequoia Eco	87¼	+ ¼	6.8	-6.2
255¾	195⅛	Temple Bar	222½	- 2	3.7	-5.5
183¾	130	Tplton Emg Mkt	145	- 1½	2.2	-13.9
⅜	⅛	Tiger Royal and Invest♦	⅛	...	...	87.5
496	263	TR Property	315½	...	4.5	-5.9
83	64⅜	Troy Inc&Gth	69⅜	- 2⅛	2.0	-0.9
260	152	Utilico Ord	156	- 5	3.3	-29.5
227½	196½	Utilico Emerging Mkt	202	...	3.3	-14.4
147	139⅝	UtilFin RdZDP 2022	139	- 6	...	-5.5
775	500	Vietnam Ent Inv	578	...	...	-10.6
252	199¾	Witan	216	- ½	2.4	-7.9
3625	2820	Ww Health	3235	- 25	0.7	-5.8

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Construction & property

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
237½	133	Alumasc♦	157½	+ 2½	6.0	7.9
17½	10⅛	Aseana Props	11	...	...	-5.5
71¾	48⅝	Assura Grp	55⅛	- ⅝	5.2	11.0
2⅜	1⅜	Aukett Swanke♦	2¼	...	...	-3.4
340⅜	215½	Balfour Beatty	331½	+ 4	1.3	15.7
760	323⅜	**Barratt Devs**	406⅜	+ 1½	7.2	6.3
3363	1586½	Bellway‡	1939½	+ 2½	6.0	5.8
4903	3165	**Berkeley**	3819	+ 9	0.2	9.9
1724	987	Big Yellow Group	1146	- 1	2.9	7.5
282	181½	Billington Hldgs♦	225	...	1.8	18.2
345	227	Boot (Henry)	239	- 1	2.3	12.7
556⅜	324¾	**Br Land**‡	400	- 1½	3.7	54.8
160	110	Caledonian Tst♦	150	+ 15	...	29.9
179¼	95½	Cap & Count Prop	102⅝	...	0.4	30.2
65	43¾	Cap & Regnl	50	- ⅞	...	-0.4
2550	1950	Cardiff Prop	2420	...	0.7	26.3
38½	17	Carecapital♦	17	...	...	-2.0
170	106	Clarke T	119¾	...	3.6	8.6
231	131⅜	CLS Hldgs	155	+ ½	4.8	5.2
464¾	191⅝	Countryside Prop	229¾	+ 14	...	16.7
37½	6	Craven House♦	7⅜	...	...	-0.1
4002	2756½	**CRH**	3217	- 8	2.6	13.3
3528	1876	Derwent London	2326	- 14	3.2	10.3
4¼	3	Dolphin Capital♦	3¾	...	...	-2.6
36½	23	First Prop♦	24¾	+ 1¼	1.8	...
52½	36½	Fletcher King♦	43½	+ 1	...	...
46⅝	27¼	Foxtons Group	30½	- ¼	0.5	...
190⅞	145	Galliford Try‡	157½	- 2	2.9	35.0
620	252½	Genuit Group	304	- 12	2.8	18.4
800	337	Gleeson (MJ)	345	- 9	4.3	5.3
1255	630½	Grafton Gp Uts	782¾	- 2½	4.5	9.0
319⅛	205⅜	Grainger	243⅜	- 1½	2.2	15.1
741	409⅛	Gr Portland‡	510	...	2.4	-6.3
39⅞	17⅛	Hammerson	23¾	...	1.6	-2.5
191	101	Harworth Gp	105	- 1	1.7	3.6
630	450	Heath (Samuel)♦	450	...	1.5	9.3
454	296½	Helical PLC‡	316½	- 2	3.1	7.6
1065	875	Highcroft Invs	955	- 5	5.4	4.1
208⅛	148½	Ibstock	151⅞	- 4⅝	2.7	19.7
314	181	James Halstead♦‡	196	+ ½	3.8	20.8
1000	591	Keller	734	- 10	4.8	8.5
9146⅞	3836½	Kingspan Group	4515	- 87¾	0.7	17.7
813⅛	485¼	**Land Sec**‡	625	- 1	5.4	...
105	71½	Life Science Reit	74	...	...	...
25	12	Lon & Assoc	21½	- ½	...	-2.9
285⅛	161¾	London Metric Prop‡	179⅝	- 1¼	4.8	3.8
59	37	Macau Prop Op	46½	+ ½	...	-6.0
713¾	225⅜	Marshalls	275⅜	- 7½	3.2	10.0
138	74	Michelmersh♦‡	101	...	3.6	16.1
2540	1392	Morgan Sindall	1558	- 42	4.4	7.6
14650	11100	Mountview	11800	...	3.6	14.7
100	68¼	NewRiver REIT	82⅜	...	3.6	-2.8
297	195	Palace Capital	216½	+ 2½	5.0	10.3
310	255	Panther Securities♦	295	...	4.0	2.6
2883	1138½	**Persimmon**	1271	+ 1	18.4	5.1
8	2¾	Pires Investments♦	3¼	...	...	-7.1
175	55	Plaza Cent	55	- 10	...	-0.1
153	98⅝	Primary Hlth	112½	- ⅞	5.5	11.4
40½	29½	Real Estate Invs♦	31½	- 1	11.9	4.1
709	372½	Redrow	463¾	+ 1⅛	5.2	5.7
1418	794	Safestore	939	+ 7½	2.1	5.3
1450	763½	Savills	852½	- 6	2.7	8.5
7¼	5¾	Secure Property♦	5¾	...	...	15.2
1436½	694	**Segro**	811¾	- 1⅜	2.7	2.4
51⅛	27¾	SIG	30⅜	- ⅛	...	...
98½	37⅜	SigmaRoc♦	52⅛	- ¾	...	...
142¾	66½	Sirius Real Estate	83⅝	+ 1⅛	3.9	6.5
161½	146½	Smart (J)	160½	...	2.0	4.3
50	26	Steppe Cement♦	45	...	8.4	10.3
178	85	**Taylor Wimpey**	103½	- ½	8.0	6.8
178½	129	Town Centre	157	...	2.2	6.2
1635	738	Travis Perkins	947⅛	+ 10	1.2	9.2
249	125⅝	Tritax Big Box Reit	148	- 1	4.4	2.6
118	58⅝	Tritax Eurobox	63⅝	- 1	...	...
414	184½	Tyman	220	- 3	3.6	8.7
1207	791½	**UNITE GRP**	922½	- 10½	2.0	10.7
1225	519½	Vistry Group	604½	+ 8½	6.6	5.3
176¾	105⅜	Warehouse REIT‡	109½	- 1⅜	5.6	2.5
887	343⅜	Workspace Grp	412⅜	- ⅛	4.3	-6.1
755	645	Wynnstay Props♦‡	670	...	3.1	4.8

Consumer goods

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
6¾	4	Agriterra♦	4⅝	...	...	-0.5
30½	25	Airea♦	25½	...	...	9.4
952	682	Anglo-Eastern	814	...	...	7.4
355	207½	Animalcare♦	220	+ 2½	1.8	...
2131	1237	**AB Foods**	1666½	- 3	0.3	27.5
133½	79	Bakkavor Group	97⅛	+ 3⅝	6.8	10.1
588	432	Barr (AG)	523	- 2	...	18.5
5⅝	1¾	Bidstack Group♦	3	...	...	-2.4
122	26	Brand Architekts♦	26	...	...	-1.1
3628	2548½	**Brit Amer Tob**	3410½	- 8½	6.3	11.5
949½	707½	Britvic	817½	+ 1½	2.9	18.5
2177	1482	**Burberry Grp**	2112	- 21	2.0	18.1
243	143⅞	C&C Grp	177	+ 1	...	...
10	4⅜	Capital Metals♦	4¾	...	...	-1.2
160	92	Carr's Grp	116	- ½	4.3	14.3
640	363	Character Grp♦	370	+ 4	2.4	6.6
1797½	1070	Churchill China♦	1160	...	...	...
2687	1460½	**Coca Cola HBC**	1989½	- 19½	2.7	15.9
880	595	Colefax♦	650	...	...	11.5
3820	2586	Cranswick	3152	+ 2	2.2	16.6
311	164	Devro‡	308	+ ½	2.9	16.7
4103½	3343	**Diageo**	3819	- 8	1.9	29.3
1⅞	⅝	Distil♦	¾	...	...	19.3
1085	784	Evans (M.P.)♦	860	- 20	3.2	7.3
101	66½	Finsbury Food♦‡	89½	+ ½	2.6	10.6
10090	1722	Games Workshop	7295	- 85	3.5	20.0
1124⅛	829¾	Glanbia	989⅛	- 4⅝	2.3	24.3
141	62⅛	Greencore	62⅛	- ½	...	12.4
459	231	Headlam	308	- 1	2.5	13.2
1250	518	Hilton Food	518	- 10	4.3	10.8
57	25½	Hornby♦	28½	...	...	...
2185	1486	**Imperial Brands**	2103	- 5	6.5	7.0
1⅞	1¼	J Lewis Hford♦	1¼	...	...	7.8
10241⅛	7334⅝	Kerry Gp	7693⅜	+ 289⅜	0.9	21.3
64	15½	McBride	21	...	...	-3.7
335	200	Mulberry Group♦	230	...	...	9.5
1540	1055	Nichols♦	1080	...	1.7	...
327	165	Norcros‡	188	- 1	4.3	5.9
374	290⅞	Origin Ents♦	340⅛	...	2.7	10.7
68	50	Pittards♦	62½	...	0.8	29.4
710	302½	Portmeirion♦	302½	...	4.3	12.8
1	⅝	Provexis♦	⅝	...	...	0.3
214½	182¾	PZ Cussons	212½	+ ½	2.8	24.5
200½	102	REA	113	...	...	-8.9
3¼	1	Real Gd Fd♦	1½	...	...	0.1
630	235	Tandem♦	280	...	3.1	3.9
1315	507	Treatt	658	+ 1	0.9	26.4
4½	1¾	Ukrproduct Gp♦	3¼	...	...	-2.2
69⅜	8¾	Unbound Group♦	8¾	...	...	...
4833	4010	Unilever (NV)	4833	- 26½	2.9	24.8
4161	3328	**Unilever**‡	4161	- 25	3.4	21.3
1210	317	Victoria♦	436	- 2	...	...

Engineering

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
...	...	Ass Br Eng#	15	...	...	-3.5
1381	739	Avon Rubber	1046	- 14	2.8	...
367½	268½	Babcock	287½	- 4¾	...	-1.7
846⅛	528¾	**BAE Sys**	823⅛	- 2¾	2.9	15.0
2250	1600	Braime A N/V♦	2050	...	0.5	23.1
2300	1480	Braime Group♦	1750	+ 50	0.6	19.7
602½	500	Caffyns	500	...	...	7.2
6½	3	Cap XX Ld♦	4	...	...	-8.5
374	279	Castings‡	351	+ 3	4.3	16.9
7⅞	4	Chamberlin♦	4	...	...	-0.3
54	14½	Checkit♦	14½	...	...	-1.7
600	391	Cohort♦	417½	+ ½	2.6	37.1
349	160½	Crestchic Plc♦	344	...	...	...
1760	1020⅜	Dewhurst♦	1150	...	1.1	13.2
371	232⅞	Dialight	320	...	...	...
1746⅝	903	Electrolux 'B'	1186⅝	- 3¾	5.5	8.9
180	85½	Feedback♦	85½	- 2	...	...
1275	429	Gooch Hsego♦	429	+ 3	1.0	31.7
3570	2400	Goodwin	3225	+ 75	3.1	17.8
3216	1876½	**Halma**	2124	- 36	0.8	30.7
1826	893	Hill & Smith‡	1132	- 30	2.6	26.6
125	77½	Holders Tech♦	80	+ 2½	0.9	4.8
3¼	¾	Image Scan♦	⅞	...	...	5.7
1812	1071	IMI	1295	- 47	1.7	17.6
...	...	Inspirit Energy♦	...	...	...	...
8740	6090	Judges Scientific♦	8440	+ 240	0.6	42.5
81	60	LPA♦	79	- 2	...	...
798¾	732¾	Meggitt	798¾	+ ⅛	...	...
173½	95½	**Melrose**	125	- 1	1.2	...
368	217	Morgan Advanced	299	- 3½	2.2	12.6
560	227½	Mpac♦	260	+ 1	...	6.8
387	213	MS Intl♦	387	+ 41	0.9	55.2
2665	1720	Oxford Inst‡	2125	- 25	0.8	29.0
2889⅜	1037¼	Philips El nv	1169¼	- 10¾	6.1	20.7
36½	12¾	PipeHawk♦	13½	...	...	28.7
101½	23⅛	Pressure Tech♦	31	- ½	...	-2.5
5000	3342	Renishaw	3756	- 24	1.7	21.4
32	20	Renold♦	22	...	...	7.8
131¾	66⅛	**Rolls-Royce**	90½	- 2⅞	...	61.5
2⅝	1⅛	Ross Gp	1¼	...	...	-3.2
373⅜	229½	Rotork	305	- 1	2.8	33.1
214	137½	SDI Group♦	156	- 17	...	25.7
152	111	Senior	123¾	- 2	...	21.6
74⅜	48	Severfield	64	- ⅛	4.5	11.4
16¼	11¼	Six Hundred♦	12½	+ ¼	...	73.1
1822¼	1141¼	SKF B	1363⅞	- 29⅝	4.1	10.1
270	175	Slingsby (HC)♦	270	...	...	4.4
1629	1364	**Smiths**	1611½	+ 13	2.3	25.6
1400⅛	946¾	Solid State♦	1385	...	1.1	33.3
598	360	Somero Enter♦	388	+ ½	4.1	8.6
3704	2458	Spectris	3181	+ 18	2.1	10.4
16255	9130	**Spirax-Sarco**	10930	- 175	1.1	34.4
57½	37	Surface Trsfms♦	40½	- ½	...	...
3½	1½	Tanfield♦	3¼	...	...	-9.0
495	345	Thorpe FW♦	420	- 5	1.3	29.2
4¾	⅝	TP Group♦	2⅛	...	...	-3.2
100½	48½	Transense Tech♦	91½	...	...	67.2
3500	2824	Ultra Electrncs	3500	+ 6	1.6	37.4
491	284½	Vesuvius	375½	- 9⅛	5.4	10.0
1530	1060	Videndum	1146	- 44	1.3	21.0
360½	225	Volex♦‡	254½	- 5½	1.3	13.8
1897	1328½	Weir	1683	- 72	0.6	28.4
5250	1464	XP Power	2040	...	4.5	10.9
185	111¼	Zytronic♦	125	- 2½	...	41.6

Health

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
1750	1049	Abcam♦	1260	- 7	...	...
338	234½	AdvancedMedical♦	267	+ 1½	0.6	41.9
35½	13¼	Allergy Therap♦	13¼	- ¼	...	...
156	46½	Angle♦	52½	- ½	...	-7.1
710	370	Anpario♦	480	...	1.7	25.2
11440	8191	**AstraZeneca**	11258	+ 108	1.8	...
46	29	Circassia Group♦	34	...	...	34.0
245¾	166¾	**Convatec**	228¾	+ 2⅛	1.8	53.4
98½	30	Creighton	30	...	3.8	5.7
5325	2520	**Dechra Pharma**	2736	+ 56	1.4	40.8
1⅜	⅞	Deltex Medical♦	⅞	...	...	-5.2
48⅜	15⅜	e-Therapeutics♦	21⅞	...	...	...
230	82½	Eco Animal Hlth♦	104	...	0.9	12.6
79½	30	EKF Diagnostics♦	44½	+ ¾	2.2	12.6
46¾	24⅝	Futura Medical♦	46¼	+ 1⅝	...	...
5010	2234	Genus‡	3016	+ 10	1.0	53.6
1828½	1296	**GSK**	1492⅜	+ 104½	5.3	17.2
1	⅜	Gunsynd♦	⅜	...	...	4.1
316½	246⅛	**Haleon**	305⅝	+ 10½	...	...
2279	1190½	Hikma Pharms	1539	+ 21	2.4	11.5
539	134½	Hutchmed China♦	211	- 15	...	...
...	...	Immunodiag Sys♦	378	...	0.5	...
8	2⅛	ImmuPharma♦	2⅛	...	...	-0.6
1786	1060	Indivior	1786	+ 114	...	...
126½	57	Inspiration Health♦‡	57	- 4½	1.0	8.8
62	26½	IXICO♦	26½	- 2¾	...	8.4

Equity prices Business

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
501½	291½	Mediclinic Int	495	– 1	...	30.9
8½	1½	N4 Pharma♦	2	...	...	-2.3
88.42	72.84	Novartis	CHF 85.78	+ 0.50	3.2	9.5
33	2¼	Omega Diags♦	3¼	...	...	-1.2
22½	5½	Ovoca Bio♦	5⅝	– ⅛	...	-1.5
1304	297	Oxford Biomedica	393½	– 7	...	17.6
6¾	2	Physiomics♦	2⅝	...	...	-8.4
5½	3¼	Proteome Scies♦	4	...	...	...
6808	5450	**Reckitt Benck**	5912	– 18	2.9	...
145	31⅞	RUA Life Sciences♦	33	+ ½	...	-3.1
295	81	Sareum Hldgs♦	81	+ 2½	...	...
1338½	984½	**Smith & Neph**	1091½	+ 19½	2.5	24.7
254½	206	Spire Hcare	221	– 6½	...	...
212½	16½	Synairgen♦	17	– 1½	...	-0.7
½	¼	Tissue Regenix♦	½	...	...	-7.2
47½	27¾	Totally♦	32¾	– ¼	1.5	51.9
495	292	Tristel‡	360	...	1.8	74.2
42	10½	ValiRx♦	12¾	– ¼	...	...

Industrials

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
181	54¾	Accsys Tech♦	68	– ⅞	...	...
5872	3321	BASF	4084¾	– 43	6.7	8.0
5789⅞	3783⅞	Bayer DM50	4547¾	– 7¾	3.6	53.1
335	46½	Biome Tech♦	83½	+ 7½	...	-2.7
5⅛	1⅞	Byotrol♦	2¼	...	...	...
7¼	6¼	Camb Gbl Timber♦	6¾	...	...	-9.0
81⅜	50⅞	Coats Grp	67¾	– 2	2.0	15.1
10410	5908	**Croda**	6834	– 70	1.3	29.7
1475	825	Cropper (James)♦	875	...	...	26.6
146½	87⅝	Elementis	110⅝	+ ⅛	...	...
36	13⅜	Hardide♦	13¾	...	...	-2.6
2360	1721	Johnson Math	2069	– 65	3.3	26.0
1950½	1309	**Mondi**	1476½	+ 8½	3.4	11.2
94½	75	Robinson♦	77½	– 7½	7.1	...
401¾	241¾	**Smith (DS)**	317	+ 8	3.8	18.0
641¼	425⅝	Swire Pacific	629½	– 10½	2.5	...
26½	11¼	Symph Environ♦	11⅝	...	...	...
475	88	Synthomer	129	– 3¾	13.4	2.6
2428½	1812⅞	Takeda Pharm	2399⅛	+ 12	4.8	13.4
8¼	4½	Velocys♦	4½	...	...	-5.6
2486	1576	Victrex	1646	– 40	3.6	19.6
651	500	Wynnstay Group♦	630	...	2.3	14.4
448	233	Zotefoams	297½	– 10½	2.1	17.8

Leisure

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
323⅝	86⅛	888 Hldgs	95½	– 2¼	11.5	7.0
874	542	Accesso Tech♦	750	– 12	...	19.7
690	370	Best of the Best♦	420	...	1.1	4.6
1588⅜	501¾	Carnival	655	– 20⅝	...	-1.0
140	98½	Celtic♦	111½	...	...	11.0
53	1⅞	Cineworld	4⅝	...	...	-0.1
465⅛	215⅛	Domino's Pizza	285⅝	...	4.2	14.5
1728	1075½	**Entain**	1361	+ 7½	...	30.4
12175	7614	**Flutter Ent**	11775	– 190	...	...
36⅛	22	Gaming Realms♦	23½	– 1	...	...
290	290	Heavitree♦	290	...	...	17.4
200	140	Heavitree A♦	140	– 45	...	8.4
145	115	Hermes Pacific♦	145	...	...	...
5338	4193	**Intercont Htls**	4767	+ 13	...	44.6
1¼	⅞	Minoan Gp♦	1	...	...	-7.2
266¾	102	Mitch & Butlers	151⅛	+ 9⅛	...	...
312	92½	On The Beach	125	– ¾	...	-6.5
1600	1180	PPHE Hotels	1220	– 15	...	-9.9
168	52⅝	Rank Grp	85⅛	– 5⅛	...	11.5
106⅞	27⅝	Restaurant Gp	27⅞	– ¼	...	-5.2
35½	21½	Rotala♦	34	...	...	...
40	15½	Sportech♦	19¼	...	...	...
303⅞	184⅞	SSP Group	222⅞	...	...	-4.3
6¼	3¼	Tasty♦	3¼	...	...	4.3
305	47½	Tintra♦	255	+ 5	...	-4.5
294⅛	105⅝	TUI	140⅛	– 2¾	...	-1.4
4	1⅛	Webis Holdings♦	1¼	...	...	...
973	389⅝	Wetherspoon JD	438	+ 1⅜	...	-4.0
3243	2285	**Whitbread**‡	2584	– 1	...	...
1660	870	Young & Co - A♦	1038	+ 10	...	...
890	564	Young & Co - N/V♦	638	+ 8	...	...

Media

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
½	⅛	7digital Gp♦	⅜	...	...	-3.3
87½	44½	Aeorema Comms♦	80	...	...	22.1
35	20½	Altitude Group♦	32½	...	...	...
98	72	Arcontech Grp♦	78½	...	3.5	10.8
438	176½	Ascential	204½	– 2	...	...
741⅝	486½	**Auto Trader**	559¾	– 8⅝	0.8	27.6
492	328	Bloomsbury Pub	468	– 7½	1.8	19.3
10¾	3¼	Bonhill Group♦	5¾	...	...	...
120	47½	Catalyst Media♦	119½	...	...	...
¾	⅛	Catenae♦	⅛	...	...	-0.3
1090	269	Daily Mail‡	270	– 2½	8.9	10.3
195	100	DCD Media♦#	100	– 30	...	5.0
71½	43	Ebiquity♦	43½	...	...	...
1466	829	Euromoney In Inv	1460	+ 2	0.7	...
3830	1145	Future	1341	– 56	0.1	23.0
1425	930	GlobalData♦	1185	– 10	1.4	58.6
115	46¾	Hyve Group	68½	+ ⅞	...	...
288½	46½	IG Design Grp♦	139	+ 3	6.2	20.3
624	464½	**Informa**	616½	– 4	...	...
123⅞	55⅛	ITV	75¾	– 1	...	8.1
12	7½	Jaywing♦	8¼	...	...	...
12¾	2½	Live Company Gp♦	3¼	...	...	-0.6
...	...	Mediazest♦	...	...	...	-5.8
47½	34	Merit Grp♦	36	– 2	...	...
74	30	Mirada♦	32½	...	...	-1.4
70	42	Mission Group♦	47	– 1	4.9	7.9
225½	167	Moneysupermarket	190¾	– ½	6.1	19.4
1930⅝	1218⅝	News Corp A	1490	– 25⅝	0.9	24.3
1953⅛	1244⅜	News Corp B	1512½	– 23¼	0.9	24.6
1458	755	Next 15 Comms♦	976	– 44	0.7	...
995⅛	571⅞	**Pearson**	936	...	2.1	44.7
107	57	Photo-Me	107	+ 5	...	18.6
4¼	2	Primorus Inv♦	2⅝	...	...	5.3
175½	108½	Quarto	118½	– 2½	...	6.6
285½	67	Reach	108½	+ ¼	6.4	...
2¼	⅜	REACT Grp♦	1¼	...	...	16.4
2449	2071	**Relx**	2335	+ 18	2.0	30.8
800⅜	445⅜	**Rightmove**	555	– 2⅝	0.8	31.4
155	87½	SpaceandPeople♦	92½	...	...	...
360	247	STV Group	258	+ 4	3.7	6.2
467	140	System1 Group♦	140	+ 2½	...	6.7
3586⅞	2296⅜	21st Cent Fox Inc A	2499	– 43	1.3	13.7
3264⅞	2165⅞	21st Cent Fox Inc B	2352⅝	– 44¼	1.4	12.9
...	...	Vela Tech♦	...	...	...	7.0
318	205	Wilmington	310	...	1.9	19.7
1224	725¾	**WPP**	840⅝	– 17	3.1	16.0
123½	71	Zinc Media♦	87½	...	...	-5.5

Natural resources

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
1⅜	⅝	ADM Energy♦	⅝	...	...	...
5¼	...	Advance Energy♦#	⅛	...	...	-0.1
53	17¾	AFC Energy♦	20	– ⅝	...	...
...	...	Afentra PLC	...	...	...	...
¼	...	Alba Mineral Res♦	...	...	...	-2.2
1	⅜	Alien Metals♦	⅜	...	...	...
118¼	67⅜	Alumina	89	+ 1	5.2	18.5
1¼	½	Aminex	1	...	...	-6.4
3⅜	⅛	Amur Mins Corp♦	1½	...	...	...
11694⅞	7928	Anglo Amer Plat	7928	– 34⅞	6.1	5.7
4170½	2547½	**Ang Am**	3270	– 54½	5.4	6.4
120½	64	Anglo Asian Mng♦	87	+ 2½	6.6	7.5
1781½	991½	**Antofagasta**	1413	– 22	3.7	14.6
5¼	2¾	Arc Minerals♦	3	...	...	2.2
4¾	2½	Ariana Res♦	3½	...	...	4.7
¾	⅜	Arkle Resources♦	½	...	...	-1.8
5⅜	1⅜	Armadale Cap♦	1¾	...	...	...
2⅝	⅞	Asiamet Rsrcs♦	1⅛	...	...	...
448	188	Atalaya Mine♦	315	+ 5	9.2	3.9
¼	...	Baron Oil♦	⅛	...	...	...
17½	3⅞	Beowulf Mining♦	4¼	...	...	...
⅛	...	Bezant Res♦	...	...	...	-1.9
3019	2034	BHP Group	2557½	– 22½	...	11.1
6⅞	½	Border & Sthn Pet♦	1⅜	...	...	...
49⅝	14⅝	Bougainville	15⅛	– 1⅞	...	...
4¾	1⅞	BowLeven♦	1⅞	...	...	-2.4
501⅜	323⅛	**BP**‡	464	– 10⅝	3.3	16.8
30⅝	8⅞	Cadence Min♦	9	– ⅛	...	0.9
3½	1⅛	Cadogan Petrol	2	...	...	30.5
1250	825	Caledonia Mining♦	945	– 15	3.6	9.2
253⅜	179⅞	Capricorn Energy	248⅜	– 1⅛	...	1.9
5¼	2¼	Caspian Sunrise♦‡	4	...	...	...
109⅛	74⅝	Centamin	106⅜	+ ⅜	4.8	16.5
284	200½	Cent Asia Metals♦	249	– 4	6.4	7.3
20¼	9⅞	Chaarat Gold♦#	10⅞	...	...	...
23⅞	6⅞	Chariot Oil & Gas♦	18⅜	...	...	...
10½	3	China Nonferr Gold♦	3	...	...	...
⅝	...	Clontarf Energy♦	...	...	...	-1.5
37	16⅞	Condor Gld♦	16⅞	...	...	-9.8
2	⅛	Corcel♦	⅜	...	...	-0.2
7498½	54⅝	DRD Gold	54⅜	+ ⅜	7.0	6.4
1⅝	½	ECR Minerals♦	⅞	...	...	-5.7
25½	8	Edenville Energy♦	8	...	...	-0.5
11¾	¾	Empyrean Energy♦	⅞	...	...	-6.2
2090	1461	**Endeavour Mining**	1706	+ 9	2.8	25.3
36½	17	EnQuest	22½	– ⅝	...	1.4
28½	4⅛	Eurasia Mining♦	4⅛	– ⅛	...	...
3½	1	Europa Oil&Gas♦	1	...	...	10.0
323	97½	Ferrexpo	167⅝	+ 5¼	8.5	1.3
914¾	622⅝	**Fresnillo**	866⅛	– 11⅝	2.8	20.5
...	...	G3 Exploration#	28	...	...	-2.6
41½	21	Galantas Gold♦	34½	...	...	-5.8
8⅛	3¾	GCM Resources♦	5	...	...	-4.2
72⅞	28⅜	Gem Diamonds	33½	...	5.4	3.5
34½	14⅞	Getech♦	16	+ 1⅜	...	-3.8
563⅞	351⅞	**Glencore**	540¼	– 15⅜	1.6	19.7
⅞	¼	Global Petrol♦	¼	...	...	-4.5
117829⅜	913⅝	Gold Fields	913⅝	+ 1⅝	2.8	14.0
12½	6⅝	Goldplat♦	12½	...	...	9.2
11⅛	4⅝	Goldstone Res♦	4⅝	...	...	...
16⅞	7⅛	Greatld Gld♦	8	+ ⅝	...	...
120½	70	Griffin Mining♦	72	...	...	7.9
310	168⅝	Gulf Keystone	199⅝	– 3¾	4.2	12.4
530	298½	**Harbour Energy**	300¼	– 9	...	35.0
25⅞	5⅝	Harland & Wolff Gp♦	21⅞	– ⅝	...	1.7
147⅝	51½	Hochschild	65½	– 2¾	4.7	6.3
173	85	Horizonte Minrls♦	135½	+ 1½	...	...
18⅛	5	Hummingbird Res♦	6	...	...	-6.8
356½	144⅝	Hunting PLC	244½	– 14½	2.4	-6.2
106½	12⅝	IGas Energy♦	16⅝	– ¾	...	-0.8
½	⅛	Independ Res♦	⅛	...	...	-0.2
317	214	Indus Gas♦	264	...	...	27.3
1¼	¼	Ironveld♦	¼	...	...	-4.2
432½	79⅞	ITM Power♦	90	– 10	...	...
17½	10½	Jubilee Metals♦	11⅛	...	...	9.4
3¼	1⅜	Karel Diamd Res♦	2⅛	...	...	-8.9
1¼	½	KEFI Gold and Copper♦	⅝	...	...	-3.0
526	380⅛	Kenmare Res	420	– 7½	2.6	4.9
39½	5⅜	Lamprell#	8⅞	...	...	-0.7
30¾	11⅞	Landore Res♦	13⅞	– ⅞	...	-3.0
⅝	⅜	Lansdowne O&G♦	½	...	...	...
21	14	Leeds Group♦	14	...	...	-2.2
6⅛	1⅞	Lexington Gold♦	5⅛	+ ⅜	...	...
20½	2⅜	MC Mining♦	13	– ½	...	-2.7
1⅝	⅜	Metals Explorn♦	1⅛	...	...	2.0
⅝	⅛	Nostra Terra♦	¼	...	...	-1.5
8⅛	2	Nostrum O&G	2⅛	...	...	...
233⅛	213⅛	Oil Search	218⅞	– 5⅜	0.1	60.3
1⅜	⅜	Oilex♦#	⅜	...	...	-3.7
⅜	...	Oriole Resources♦	...	...	...	-1.1
1	½	Ormonde Mining♦	½	...	...	-2.5
17⅜	7⅜	Orosur Mining♦	7⅜	+ ¼	...	...
24	16	Pan African Res♦‡	16½	...	5.0	5.4
149½	67⅜	Pantheon Res♦	97	+ 17⅜	...	...
79	34⅞	Parkmead Grp♦	58	+ ⅜	...	-5.0
⅝	⅛	Pathfinder Mins♦	½	...	...	-4.7
134	60⅛	Petra Diamonds	93	– ½	...	3.1
4	1⅜	Petrel Resources♦	1⅜	...	...	-6.9
4⅜	1⅝	Petro Matad♦	2⅛	...	...	...
157⅞	79⅝	Petrofac	79⅝	– 2⅜	...	-2.0
4⅝	¾	Petroneft Res♦	¾	...	...	-0.9
21¼	⅞	Petropavlovsk#	1⅛	– ⅜	...	1.6
7½	3½	Phoenix Global♦	6½	+ ¼	...	-1.6
10	1⅜	Plexus Holdings♦	1⅜	...	...	-0.4
1360	92	Polymetal Intl	244	+ 6	39.9	...
772	499	Porvair	508	– 20	1.0	19.5
11¾	3	Prospex Energy♦	11½	+ ¼	...	...
22	8½	Proton Motor Power S♦	13⅞	– ⅝	...	-2.5
4	1⅜	Providence Res♦	3¼	...	...	29.0
2¼	1	Quadrise Fuels Intl♦	2	...	...	-7.9
40½	3⅜	Rambler Met&Min♦‡	5⅜	+ ¼	...	0.1
⅜	...	Reabold Resources♦	¼	...	...	-4.7
⅝	¼	Red Rock Res♦	¼	...	...	-2.0
7098⅛	4873⅜	Rio Tinto Ltd	6369	– 30⅞	7.8	6.6
6225	4486	**Rio Tinto**	5616	– 64	8.9	5.8
41⅛	34	San Leon Energy♦	36	+ 1	...	13.4
⅞	⅜	Scirocco Energy♦	¼	...	...	...
70	22⅞	Serabi Gold♦	27	– 1	...	3.6
450	206½	Serica Energy♦	279	– 11	1.2	...
12½	6⅜	Shanta Gold♦	9¼	– ¼	1.0	5.8
2526½	1573⅞	**Shell**‡	2315¼	– 43	2.6	12.2
2⅞	⅞	Sound Energy♦	1	...	...	6.5
⅛	...	Sunrise Resources♦	⅛	...	...	...
¼	...	Tertiary Minerals♦	⅛	...	...	-4.4
⅞	⅜	Thor Mining♦	⅜	...	...	-2.4
5108½	3580⅝	Total Eng SE	4888	– 67⅛	4.6	11.1
⅝	⅛	Tower Resources♦	⅛	...	...	-3.6
62⅛	36⅜	Tullow Oil	38⅛	– 2⅝	...	3.8
⅛	...	UK Oil & Gas♦	...	...	...	-2.1
460	135	URU Metals♦	175	...	...	5.6
2¼	⅛	Vast Res♦	⅛	...	...	...
5½	2⅝	Victoria Oil&Gas♦#	3⅛	...	...	-1.8
5¼	2⅛	W Resources♦#	2⅛	...	...	-0.3
8⅛	2⅛	Westmount Engy♦	2½	...	...	-0.5
251⅝	104⅜	Wood Grp (J)	125	– 4⅝	...	-5.1
8	1⅜	Woodbois♦	1⅝	...	...	7.1
7	1⅜	Xtract Resources♦	1⅜	...	...	-3.5
7¾	4	Zephyr Energy♦	5¾	...	...	-7.3

Professional & support services

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
4225	2240	4imprint Grp	4215	+ 45	0.2	71.1
555	457	Andrews Sykes♦	480	...	4.8	15.3
6442	3359	**Ashtead**	4889	– 179	0.9	23.8
39	5¼	Asimilar Group♦	6⅛	...	...	0.3
170	58	AssetCo♦‡	72	+ 1½	...	0.4
50½	36	Avisen♦	49	...	...	...
148	100	Begbies Traynor♦	146	...	2.0	...
250	155	Blancco Tech♦	176	– ½	...	63.0
3163	2575	**Bunzl**‡	3003	– 32	1.8	22.7
47⅛	20⅛	Capita	23	– ⅜	...	1.7
51⅞	39⅛	CEPS♦	39⅛	...	...	-8.9
130	89	Christie Group♦	113½	– 2½	...	48.3
1969½	1507½	**Compass**	1892½	– 6	0.7	46.0
370	97	CPPGroup♦	117⅛	...	25.5	...
92	53⅞	Croma Security♦‡	60½	– 1	3.3	8.6
6486	4329	**DCC**‡	4331	– 77	3.6	14.3
160⅞	73	De La Rue	78¼	+ ¾	...	10.3
3400	2158	Diploma	2838	– 30	1.5	50.7
1060	597	Discoverie	802	– 20	1.2	65.7
63	23⅜	Driver Group♦	26	– ⅛	5.7	12.3
357	175⅛	Essentra	238⅛	– 3½	2.2	26.8
3667	2285	**Experian**	2914	+ 4	1.2	37.3
13305	8680	Ferguson‡	10120	+ 336	1.7	14.9
250	210	FIH Group♦‡	250	+ 10	...	...
150⅛	53⅞	Gattaca♦	73½	– ½	2.0	...
6⅛	4⅞	Grafenia♦	5⅛	...	...	...
610	317	Hargeaves Serv♦	375	+ 28	1.9	3.9
1194	608⅛	**Homeserve**	1191	+ 1	2.1	...
655	413	Impellam Grp♦‡	602½	...	...	32.9
44½	4	Ince G♦	6	...	...	3.4
5782	3619	**Intertek**	4082	+ 14	2.5	22.9
302	115⅛	IWG	157⅞	– 5⅛	...	-6.0
162	77	Johnson Srvce♦	93¼	– 1⅜	...	58.6
137½	99	Journeo♦	110½	+ ½	...	24.7
115½	56⅛	Kier Gp	63⅛	– ½	...	6.2
1400	1080	Latham (J)♦	1250	...	1.7	6.8
1085	695	Lok'n Store♦‡	965	– 5	1.5	29.2
3850	2300	Lon Security♦	2700	+ 230	2.9	14.8
440	220	LSL Prop Services	239	+ 1	...	6.6
137	86	Macfarlane	104	+ 2½	2.6	12.0
385	185	Maintel Hldgs♦	190	...	...	5.8
3500	8⅞	Malvern Intl♦	12	...	...	...
224	182	Mears Group	187½	– 1½	1.3	16.3
608	262	Menzies (John)	607	– 1	...	48.0
79⅞	46⅞	Mitie Gp	74½	+ ⅜	...	37.2
13⅞	3⅜	MobilityOne♦	9¼	– ¼	...	7.2
42½	25	Newmark Sec♦	33	...	...	-8.2
8	3⅜	Norm Broadbent♦	3⅞	...	...	-7.0
66½	44½	Northern Bear♦	47	...	...	4.8
286	193	NWF Grp♦‡	255	– 6	2.8	...
678	362½	PageGroup	455¼	– 9	1.0	12.3
73	47½	PCI-PAL♦	51½	+ ½	...	...
13	8⅛	Petards♦	9⅛	...	...	17.7
26½	16⅛	PHSC♦	16½	...	6.0	30.0
4½	⅞	PowerHouse Egy♦	1⅛	...	...	-2.1
90	61	Record	88⅛	– 1½	2.6	24.2
440½	283½	Redde Northgate	397	+ 23½	3.8	9.9
872	555	Renew Hldgs♦	694	– 12	1.9	17.1
851	489	Renewi	572	+ 6	...	12.1
635⅜	444½	**Rentokil Itl**	539	+ 2½	1.3	38.2
494	315	Restore♦	343	+ 8	0.7	40.8
485	331½	Ricardo	484½	+ 13	1.4	43.2
862	440	Robert Walters	558	+ 4	2.9	12.7
20	11½	Roebuck Food Grp♦	13	...	...	1.9
239	92	RPS Group	220	+ 1	0.1	...
1241	812	**RS Group**‡	914½	– 24½	2.7	23.2
43½	18	RTC Group♦	18	...	...	...
654	264⅜	RWS Hldgs♦	332½	– 10	2.7	30.5
457	350	Science Group♦	365	...	...	14.3
188¼	121¾	Serco Gp	163½	– 6	1.3	6.6
42½	27½	Smiths News	42	...	1.1	4.0
4168	2452	**Smurfit Kappa**	3032	+ 52	3.2	13.8
65⅞	36¼	Staffline Gp♦	39	...	...	30.0
557	317⅝	SThree	397½	– 11	2.0	12.8
137½	90	Synectics♦	112½	...	...	...
34½	19⅝	Thruvision Group♦	22¼	...	...	-8.1
106	42	Tribal♦	42	– 2¼	2.8	13.1
102½	49	Vianet♦	66	+ 2½	...	...
1010	660	Vp	720	+ 25	3.4	17.7
3½	1	Westminster♦	2	...	...	-2.5

Retailing

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
110½	37⅞	AO World	56⅝	– 1½	...	...
644	295½	**B&M European**‡	409⅞	– 3⅝	4.2	9.5
44	20¼	Brown (N)♦	29¼	+ 3¼	...	8.6
74¾	40⅞	Card Factory	72½	– 3½	...	...
2315	1549	CVS Group♦	2080	+ 2	0.3	58.2
265	104⅜	DFS Furn‡	146½	+ 1½	5.1	7.8
1434	670½	Dunelm	990	– 21	3.5	13.3
949½	562½	**Frasers Group**	895	+ 10½	...	39.7
3416	1673	Greggs	2350	– 8	0.6	20.5
370	124⅜	Halfords	196¼	– 1⅞	2.5	6.5
942½	480⅜	Howden Join	595⅛	– 5⅞	2.2	11.2
928	647	Inchcape	819	– 8½	1.6	27.6
6¾	1⅜	IQ-AI	2⅛	...	...	-6.1
226⅜	89⅝	**JD Sports**	126⅛	– ¼	0.2	15.2
356	203	**Kingfisher**	243⅞	...	4.9	6.1
101	56⅞	Lookers	75⅞	– ½	...	4.8
256⅞	93⅜	Marks Spencer	122⅞	+ ⅞	...	94.0
19½	6	Mothercare♦	7⅛	...	...	-4.5
680	75⅜	Naked Wines♦	108⅛	+ 11	...	...
8426	4383	**Next**‡	5880	+ 18	...	11.2
1722	393	**Ocado Gp**	685⅜	+ 23½	...	...
28⅜	19⅝	Pendragon	28⅛	...	...	8.8
474⅜	257⅞	Pets at Home‡	275½	– 1	2.9	11.2
320	72⅝	Saga	106⅝	+ 1⅜	...	...
299	169⅞	**Sainsbury J**‡	225⅞	– ½	4.6	18.9
1708½	1132½	Smith WH	1447	– 18	...	...
33	14¾	Sosandar♦	21¼	+ ¼	...	...
2¾	1⅜	Stanley Gbbns♦	1½	...	...	-1.6
169½	103	Studio Retail#	115	– 2½	...	2.4
156	69⅛	Ted Baker	109⅝	...	...	...
303⅜	199⅝	**Tesco**	228¼	– ⅝	4.0	11.6
68	38	Topps Tiles	46	– 3¾	...	8.3

Technology

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
155	87⅛	Access Intell♦	87½	...	...	...
161	81⅛	Afferian plc♦	91	...	3.2	16.3
205	137	Alfa Financial	159	– 3½	0.6	24.8
22½	8⅛	Allied Minds	13¾	+ 3⅛	...	-1.2
589	290	Aptitude Software	351	– 19	1.5	39.4
721	465	Avast	716½	– 3½	1.6	28.5
3415	1924	**Aveva Gp**‡	3198	+ 3	1.2	...
206½	126½	Bango♦	186½	– 5	...	...
84	21¾	BATM Adv Coms	21¾	– ⅝	3.4	8.9
34	8¾	Berkeley Res	17¼	...	...	-7.3
30¾	11⅜	Blackbird♦	11⅜	...	...	...
1⅛	⅞	CloudCoCo Group♦	1⅛	...	...	-2.7
2978	1810	Computacenter	1948	– 27	2.8	12.1
96	65½	Concurrent Tech♦	78½	...	3.2	18.6
14½	9¼	Corero♦	10¼	...	...	...
2470	1340	Craneware♦‡	2090	– 25	1.3	95.3
3	1⅜	Crimson Tide♦	2¼	...	...	15.3
25	11⅛	CyanConn Hldgs♦	12⅞	...	...	...
357½	221	D4t4 Solutions♦	240½	...	1.1	28.5
⅞	...	DeepMatter Gp♦	...	...	...	-0.1
24	13	Dillistone Group♦	14½	– 1½	...	-4.2
1⅜	⅛	EQTEC♦	¼	...	...	-3.3
1280	599	FDM Group	742	– 7	5.8	25.7
16¾	9	Filtronic♦	13⅜	+ 1⅜	...	37.1
2450	1230	First Derivts♦	1468	+ 18	...	...
739½	320	GB Group♦	320	– 1⅜	2.0	24.4
183	136	GreshamTech	167½	...	0.4	...
193½	30½	Ilika♦	31	...	...	-8.8
132	71½	Ingenta♦	119½	...	1.2	69.8
81	38	Intercede♦	55	...	...	18.9
200	113	Iomart♦	114¾	– 1⅛	6.1	12.6
51⅞	28⅛	IQE♦	49	– 1⅞	...	...
179	115½	K3 Business Tch♦	128½	+ ½	...	-2.2
2298¾	1059⅛	LG Electronics	1358	+ 130⅞	...	3.6
½	⅜	Location Sciences♦	⅜	...	...	-2.0
527	256¼	Micro Focus Intl	519¾	– 1¾	3.4	-5.5
80½	45	MTI Wireless♦	56½	+ 1½	3.2	18.8
52⅛	17	Nanoco Gp	37½	– 1	...	...
93½	52	Netcall♦	86	...	0.4	...
67½	44½	Northamber♦	44½	...	2.2	...
47½	10¼	Online Blockchain♦	16½	...	...	-8.6
126½	76½	Oxford Metrics♦	103	+ 2	1.7	44.7
9	6	Parity♦	6	– ¼	...	-8.7
40	29	Pennant Intl♦	33	...	...	...
745½	390¾	Playtech	524½	– 3½	...	5.5
394¾	243	QinetiQ	348	– 5	3.2	27.1
210	20½	RM	49	– ¾	9.5	9.8
853⅜	595½	**Sage Gp**	795⅛	+ 10⅛	2.1	30.4
11	5¼	Seeing Machines♦	6¼	...	...	...
139	74	Shearwater Grp♦	109	+ 1	...	67.5
85	31½	Smartspace S'ware♦	42½	...	...	-4.4
1850	1084	Softcat‡	1217	– 23	1.7	23.8
286½	215⅞	Spirent Comms	268	– 1⅜	1.7	24.9
54	24⅞	SRT Marine♦	43½	+ ½	...	...
919⅛	470⅝	Tele. Ericsson	520⅛	– 6¼	3.5	9.4
90	70	Touchstar♦	90	+ 5	...	...
1055	825	Tracsis♦	970	...	...	...
26	13½	Trakm8♦	13½	– ¾	...	...
165	97½	Triad Grp	97½	...	2.0	10.7
650	222½	Wandisco♦	644½	– 1½	...	...
1140	560	Water Intel♦	650	...	...	35.7
273	144½	Xaar	186	– 1	...	...
12¾	2	Yourgene♦	2	...	...	-1.4
185	96⅛	Zoo Digital♦	178½	+ 5½	...	...

Telecoms

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
226	102½	AdEPT Technology♦	113	...	...	...
170⅞	107⅞	**Airtel Africa**‡	121⅛	...	2.6	10.8
200⅞	114	**BT Group**	116⅞	– 3⅛	...	11.3
130⅝	55½	Currys plc	70⅛	– 1½	...	3.3
1720	1012	Gamma Comms♦	1040	– 10	1.1	18.8
175	100¼	Helios Towers	111¾	– 3¼	...	...
4538½	1103½	Just Eat T'away	1831	– 17½	...	-3.9
½	...	Mobile Streams♦	⅛	...	...	-1.8
1⅞	⅝	Mobile Tornado♦	1⅝	...	...	...
2490	1322	Telecom Plus‡	2295	– 50	2.4	58.8
139½	87⅝	**Vodafone Gp**‡	87⅝	– 1½	8.8	...

Transport

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
340	210	Braemar Ship‡	301	– 10	1.6	9.9
727⅞	285	easyJet	379¼	– 11½	...	-2.3
14⅞	4½	Esken Limited	5⅞	...	...	-0.2
139½	88½	FirstGroup‡	97⅜	– 3	...	23.3
510	251	Fisher (James)	334½	– ½	...	-6.0
178½	93⅜	**Intl Cons Air**	132¾	– 1⅜	...	-2.9
526⅜	183⅛	Int Distrib Serv	217½	– 4⅞	4.6	2.4
402½	262½	Irish Cont Uts	378	– 11	...	...
1423	667⅜	Jet2♦	966⅝	– 24⅝	...	-5.1
284⅛	159⅝	Natl Express	159⅞	– 1¼	...	-9.5
1050	820	Ocean Wilson	885	...	9.0	4.5
106⅛	69	Stagecoach	104⅝	...	...	14.7
24½	19½	Sutton Harbour♦	22	...	...	...
424	282	Wincanton‡	350½	– 7½	2.9	9.5
4867	1357½	Wizz Air Hldgs	2286	– 9	...	-5.1

Utilities

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
95¼	65	**Centrica**	92⅞	– 1⅜	...	9.3
258	178	ContourGlobal	250½	...	5.1	28.2
831½	473⅞	Drax Group	620	+ 3½	2.8	45.9
627½	484	Jersey Electricity	535	...	3.1	10.1
1245½	858⅜	**Natl Grid**‡	1019½	+ 1⅝	4.8	23.7
12⅞	5⅝	OPG Power♦	6	– 1	...	3.9
1212	755	Pennon	940	+ 1	3.4	68.1
⅝	⅜	Rurelec♦	½	...	...	-0.4
3211	2213	**Severn Trent**‡	2728	+ 9	3.7	...
1920	1428	**SSE**	1707	– 3	4.7	6.6
1176½	828⅛	**Utd Utilities**	1039½	+ 3½	4.1	95.3

♦AIM company; # Price at suspension; † Ex dividend; ‡ Ex scrip; ▲ Ex rights issue; ▼ Ex all; § Ex capital distribution; ☆ figures or report awaited; . . . No significant data. Companies in bold are constituents of the FTSE 100 Index. Investment Cos sector Nav Dis or Prm supplied by Morningstar.

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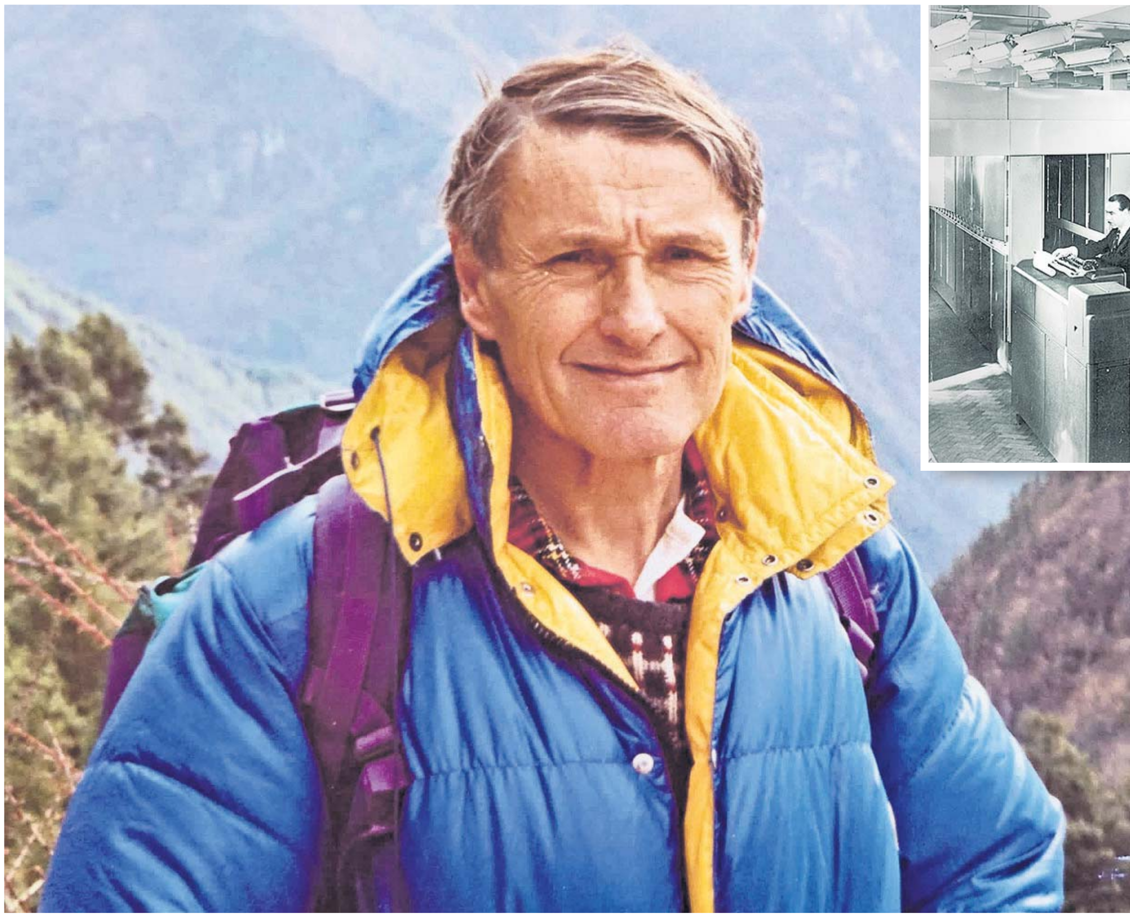
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Register

Obituaries

Peter Hermon

Brilliant mathematician and pioneering British computer programmer who changed the way companies such as Ford and BA worked





Hermon used Leo computers to program Ford's payroll. He was also an ardent hill walker, charmed by the Welsh landscape

"I wondered why J Lyons wanted a mathematician," pondered Peter Hermon in 1954, after seeing an advert in The Daily Telegraph. A recent graduate from Oxford University with a double first in pure and applied mathematics, Hermon was in an uninspiring role teaching "unmotivated" teenage boys at Leeds Grammar School. "So I applied and was interviewed," he said. "It sounded interesting, so I accepted it. It was a way of getting out of teaching."

At J Lyons & Co, the family-owned tea shop, restaurants and catering business, Hermon was initially put on a six-week training course in "programming", or what he described as "near machine language".

In 1951 J Lyons had launched the Lyons Electronic Office, or Leo, the world's first business computer, which calculated the costs of ingredients, ran the payroll and sorted out overnight orders. A gigantic piece of equipment, taking up most of a room at the Lyons headquarters at Cadby Hall, Hammersmith, it had more than 3,000 electronic valves and 32 storage tanks.

With its successful launch Lyons could see the potential in the computer business. Or, as Hermon said, it was one of the first businesses to disrupt its own business. At the end of his training Hermon was tasked with the programming for the payroll of the car manufacturer, Ford UK. "I was given details of statistics Ford wanted," he said. "And I had to produce programs to produce the statistics." As his Leo colleague, Professor Frank Land at the London School of Economics, said: "Peter was a brilliant mathematician. He could take the dots and join them up, finding solutions to complex problems."

For Hermon the role at J Lyons came at a good time. The company chose its staff carefully, valued hard workers and prided itself on its smooth-running processes. "When you're making money on cakes costing 3d, you can't afford to be inefficient with the paperwork," he said. "They had a good organisation and methods department that worked out their systems in great detail, stripped them down to the essentials — and that was a good starting-off point for computerisation."

For J Lyons he moved on to work on the installation of the first of the second-generation Leo computers on behalf of Imperial Tobacco in Bristol, necessitating a complex suite of programs for the company's byzantine pricing and credit terms.

It was still early days in computing and a hierarchy of work positions had not been assigned: pioneers they may have been, but their skills were equally called upon for business analysis, operating the machine, and sweeping the floor before the arrival of curious VIP guests.

Although his work on Leo would have lasting implications, after five years Hermon decided to part ways with Lyons. "I couldn't see the Leo life going on," he said. "They obviously couldn't make it with the intense competition from people like IBM. Leo was building four or five a year; IBM was building hundreds. It was a question of money. You had to find hundreds of millions to support computer manufacture and they hadn't got that." In 1964 Lyons sold Leo to the British industrial manufacturer English Electric.

About 13 Leo II computers were sold, and Dunlop Rubber, at Fort Dunlop, Birmingham, was early to get in on the act. In 1959, ahead of its time, it had installed an integrated sales accounting system, running on the first of a third-generation Leo. In the same year Hermon moved from Lyons to Dunlop, a key factor being that he was acquainted with the computer system. Yet it was also time to start taking the concept abroad and Hermon was seen as the man to do that. The early 1960s coincided with the height of glamour in airline travel. Passengers were expected to look smart — women in dress, coat and handbag, and men in a suit.

His statistics-wired mind was complemented by a mystical quality

The concept may have been high-flown but the administrative systems were far from slick. BOAC was having issues with its manual system of selling seats on flights.

"BOAC were behind the airline industry generally," Hermon noted. "They had no proper reservation system, and they had to get one quickly because reservation is volatile. People book in advance but close to flight departure you get lots of cancellations and if a seat's cancelled, you can't get the paperwork through quickly enough to re-offer it for sale."

Sir Giles Guthrie, the airline's chairman, looked to computerisation. And then to Hermon, who was headhunted by BOAC in 1965. Given "complete power and autonomy" by the airline, he was asked to computerise the reservation system, known as Boadicea. It was his biggest challenge to date.

The company he turned to was, unsurprisingly, IBM, which had developed a Passenger Airline Reservation System for a domestic airline with the potential to be dialled up to international travel. Granted an initial £8 million, Hermon took on a team of 300 programmers, including nine managers from Leo, and went to lengths to find out what it was the reservation staff and sales staff needed. Impressively, the project was delivered on time and on budget. In addition, the system made sales worth millions for the company as more than 50 airlines all over the world clamoured to buy it.

By now Hermon was starting to get a name for running large-scale operations in uncharted territory with a logic and consistency that owed not a little to a mathematical brain. When BOAC merged with BEA in the early 1970s he oversaw the integration of the two computer installations, and in 1976 he produced a report for the secretary of state for trade and industry that led to the amalgamation of both airlines to make British Airways. At Hermon's hand, too, was a hard-headed attitude towards staff culls resulting from the merger — from 57,000 to 38,000 — with savings of more than £100 million a year. By the early 1980s it was time to leave. He had been with the airline for the best part of 20 years, and, significantly for a computer specialist, on the boards of both BOAC and BA.

Hermon was an only child, born in Oxford in 1928 where his father Arthur was a technical manager for Morris Motors at Cowley, and his mother Beatrice (née Poulter) was a dressmaker. The family moved to Nottingham and he went to Nottingham High School with two scholarships.

When he was seven he was taken up Thorpe Cloud, a hill in the Dovedale area of the Peak District National Park. It terrified him, but by his teens he was rambling on the moorland plateau Kinder Scout and youth hostelling in the Lake District. A picture of Tryfan, a mountain in the Ogwen Valley, Snowdonia, lured him to the hidden hills of mid and south Wales and he was hooked for life.

"The British hills are the ideal scale for day walking," he said. "The weather may be trying but no one who has savoured a clear summer's day, the crisp winter air or been privileged to see the clouds part and reveal 'the whole of Wales' after a day of damp swirling mist is ever likely to forget it." If over his lifetime he trekked in Nepal, crossed Corsica, climbed Ayers Rock, and completed the north to south rim traverse of the Grand Canyon ("more times than I can remember"), it was Wales to which he returned.

After Nottingham High School, Hermon got into Oxford and, in a prediction of the brainbox role he would play at the fulcrum of computer management, won three university scholarships — a state scholarship, an open scholarship to St John's and a Henry Mellish scholarship for those living in Nottinghamshire. After graduating he was elected to a Harmsworth senior scholarship at Merton to research pure mathematics.

In Oxford Hermon met Norma Brealey, a nurse, and they married in 1954. They had four children: Juliet, an account administrator; David, who died in a car crash in 1976 at the age of 19; Robert, a property developer; and Caroline, a health visitor. Norma predeceased him in 2011.

In the years after British Airways, Hermon lent a hand at the Californian company Tandem Computers and at Lloyds of London for a root-and-branch modernisation of its computer systems — "a bridge too far", he said, for such a traditional organisation, and he did not last long. There was a position at Harris Queensway, the carpet and furniture retailer, and roles in consultancy, including a nod to the civil service as a part-time adviser on computer strategy.

Yet complementing the statistics-wired mind of Hermon was a mystical quality, partly inspired by hill walking and partly by his faith. In addition to two volumes on hill walking in Wales he wrote *Lifting the Veil*, a "plain language guide to the Bible".

He preached widely for the Association for the Propagation of the Faith, the oldest of four pontifical mission societies of the Catholic Church.

"Sometimes in the silence of lost combes the stillness and beauty, the sense of remoteness becomes almost overpowering," he said on BBC Radio 2 on Jeremy Vine's *What Makes Us Human* in 2014.

"One is led to ponder. What is life all about? Have the manifold wonders of creation exhibited so gloriously in the hills come about by chance? The result of blind, mindless evolution? Hardly."

To the end he was involved in the activities of the Leo Computers Society, attending reunions and presentations. He said he owed his success to the standards set by the Leo ethos in the 1950s.

For all his pioneering work the future remained a mystery. As recently as the 1990s he pronounced that he did not see a time where every family would have a computer that was not just for work purposes.

Peter Hermon, computer pioneer, was born on November 13, 1928. He died on November 1, 2022, aged 93

Freddie Ross Hancock

Publicist to stars such as Benny Hill and Dick Emery whose career was eclipsed by her stormy relationship with Tony Hancock

If life as Tony Hancock's agent was never easy, being his mistress was even more difficult. And being his wife was all but impossible.

Freddie Hancock fulfilled all three roles over a turbulent decade and a half before the comedian took his own life in 1968 with an overdose of barbiturates and alcohol, three days after she had divorced him. "Life with a comic genius isn't about the hilarity", she noted with considerable understatement.

Following Hancock's death she moved to New York, where she enjoyed a long and successful career as a publicist and agent with a string of high--profile clients and in 2002 she was appointed MBE for fostering Anglo-American cultural links. Yet for all her subsequent achievements, she admitted that her life had been defined by her relationship with Hancock. "It's a bit like being a pantomime character. Mostly it's an honour, sometimes it's a real bugger," she reflected.

She met Hancock in 1954 in Blackpool where he was performing with Vera Lynn and Jimmy Edwards. She was already a smart young publicist — whose clients included the comedians Benny Hill, Dick Emery and Bob Monkhouse — and he was about to find fame with the launch of the BBC radio series *Hancock's Half Hour*.

She first set eyes on him in rehearsal and recalled him lumbering into the bar afterwards wearing a sweater over his jacket, glass in hand. "He had this shabby, melancholic, hangdog look. I told him that if I had a talent like his I wouldn't hang my head low, I would hold my head high." The words — which she later had engraved on a pair of cuff links she gave him — struck a chord and he took her on as his publicist. She set about restyling him, buying suits and ordering him to get his hair cut. Notoriously highly strung, he insisted on having only her beside him before he went on stage. On occasion she found herself written into his radio scripts as a clairvoyant called Madame Freda. At the time Hancock was married to the model Cicely Romanis and it was not until 1957 they began an affair. By the early 1960s they were living together and they married following Hancock's divorce from Cicely in 1965.

From the outset the relationship was stormy, filled with depression, alcoholism and violent abuse, followed by big gestures of reconciliation.

Her own emotions were volatile and she attempted to take her own life several times. She was also hospitalised when Hancock in a drunken rage burst her eardrum. In hospital she took her revenge by ordering in a Chinese takeaway for every patient on the ward and charging it to his account. Yet when she was discharged she forgave him, until she eventually concluded she could take no more. During most of their years together, she only wore long-sleeved dresses to hide the bruises on her arms. The violent outbursts were invariably in response to her attempts to stop him drinking. "When I got between him and the bottle, he'd lash out," she said. "He had a very strong, determined nature, and I was neurotic, hysterical, doing my best to preserve his wonderful talent. Maybe, at the end of the day, nothing could have changed him but I went into our relationship thinking I could."

She reflected that 'life with a comic genius isn't about the hilarity'

LARRY ELLIS/GETTY IMAGES



Her marriage to Tony Hancock was filled with depression, alcoholism and violence

Their marriage lasted only seven months and was doomed before it began. After they became engaged in 1964, Hancock announced that he was going back to his wife. She responded by taking an overdose of pills. They got back together, only for him to throw her out of his flat without her keys and wearing nothing but a coat.

He was jealous and possessive; the night before their wedding he stood outside her flat in Dorset Square suspecting that she was having a fling with someone else.

The end of the marriage came following her fifth suicide attempt. After she had taken a potentially lethal dose of sleeping pills, Hancock walked out of the door telling her: "Make a good job of it, because I shan't be calling an ambulance." She recovered but realised they had reached the point of no return.

He ran off with Joan Le Mesurier (obituary, July 15, 2021), the wife of his friend the actor John Le Mesurier, and although he later pleaded with Freddie to return, she refused and initiated divorce proceedings for adultery. "I left Tony to save my own life," she said. She never remarried.

Born Freda Ross in 1930 in north London, she was the daughter of a bookmaker. She was educated at Kendrick School in Reading and South Hampstead High School, before taking a commercial course at Regent Street Polytechnic.

She cut her teeth in public relations working for the Holland America cruise line before she joined Universal as the assistant head of its UK publicity division, working with the Hollywood studio's biggest stars, such as Rock Hudson, on their visits to Britain.

She formed her own PR company, Freda Ross Associates, in 1952 and built up a client roster that included film stars (Julie Andrews and Sophia Loren), pop musicians (Gerry and the Pacemakers) and even sporting heroes (the racing driver Stirling Moss and Wimbledon doubles champion Angela Buxton). Following Hancock's death she suffered a health crisis and underwent major surgery. When she recovered she moved to America because she wanted to start anew and Hancock was unknown there.

His only attempt to make it in Hollywood had ended in disaster. Cast in the 1965 Disney spoof western, *The Adventures of Bullwhip Griffin*, he was sacked after making drunken advances towards the wife of a fellow actor. It was left to Freddie to fly out to extricate him from the mess.

In New York she became an important conduit between the British and American entertainment industries. She set up the American office of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts and her triumphs included organising the 80th birthday celebrations for the *Letter From America* broadcaster Alistair Cooke on behalf of the BBC. With one of the best contact books in the business, she secured the services of James Galway and Leonard Bernstein to provide the music and talked the White House into getting President Reagan to send a video message.

Less happily, she was behind the appointment of a CBE to Harvey Weinstein for his "services to the British film industry" and it was she who organised his investiture ceremony in New York. He was stripped of the honour in 2020 after his conviction for rape and sexual assault.

Despite the difficulties of her relationship with Hancock, she continued to champion his comic genius and co-authored a biography of her former husband. "I'm very lucky because I was married to a brilliant and talented man," she said 30 years after his death. "He was the most lovable, intelligent, warm and kind monster I could ever hope to meet."

Freddie Ross Hancock MBE, publicist and agent, was born on April 7, 1930. She died on November 27, 2022, aged 92

Mills Lane

Boxing referee who officiated the famous 'bite fight' between Mike Tyson and Evander Holyfield for the world heavyweight title

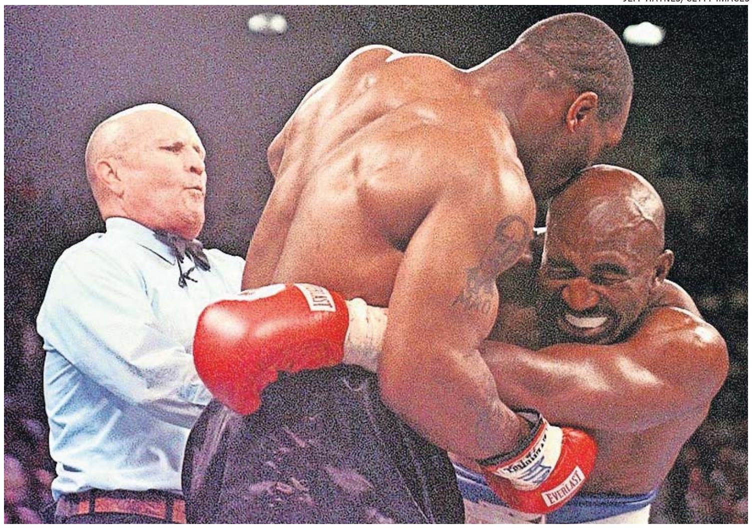
Standing in the ring between Evander Holyfield and Mike Tyson, the slight frame of referee Mills Lane was dwarfed by the two prize fighters. Yet as Tyson was about to find out, Lane, a former US Marine turned district attorney and judge, was as tough as either of the giants slugging it out for the heavyweight championship of the world.

The bout was staged in Las Vegas in 1997 and Holyfield was the reigning champion, having taken the title from Tyson seven months earlier in a surprise victory. Lane was not originally meant to be officiating and his colleague Mitch Halpern, who had overseen the previous bout, had been assigned to referee the rematch.

In the previous meeting, Halpern had stopped the fight in the 11th round and when the Tyson camp objected to his reappointment, he withdrew at the last minute and Lane was recruited to take his place.

Holyfield won the first two rounds but Tyson fought back ferociously in the third. With 40 seconds remaining in the round, he got Holyfield in a clinch, and bit off a piece of his opponent's right ear, spitting the cartilage on to the floor of the ring. Bleeding profusely, Holyfield leapt into the air with pain and Tyson rushed him before Lane separated the two men. He announced that he intended to disqualify Tyson and end the fight, but when the ringside doctor passed Holyfield fit to continue, Lane allowed the round to resume and imposed a two-point penalty.

JEFF HAYNES/GETTY IMAGES



Lane was only assigned to referee the match after the original choice pulled out

Tyson promptly bit again, this time on Holyfield's left ear. The second bite was not discovered until the two fighters were back in the corners at the end of the round and this time Lane did not prevaricate. The exchange between referee and fighter has entered boxing history. "You bit his ear," Lane told him. "No, it was a punch," Tyson lied. "Bullshit! That's it. You're gone," Lane shouted and declared Holyfield the victor on a disqualification. Three weeks later, Lane disqualified Henry Akinwande in a heavyweight bout against Lennox Lewis for ignoring his warnings against illegal holding. The two fights made Lane a celebrity.

Outside of the ring, as a district court judge he was known as "Maximum Mills", and after retiring from refereeing in 1998 he spent the next three years presenting his own reality TV court show, *Judge Mills Lane*. He also wrote an autobiography, *Let's Get It On: Tough Talk from Boxing's Top Ref and Nevada's Most Outspoken Judge*. The title was taken from the catchphrase he yelled at the start of every one of the 100 professional bouts he refereed.

Mills Bee Lane was born in 1937 in Savannah, Georgia, into a wealthy southern family; his grandfather had founded the state's largest bank. The eldest of five children, Lane grew up on a 13,000-acre plantation in South Carolina, where his father, Remer, raised cattle and logged timber.

At Middlesex School in Concord, Massachusetts, he was a talented sportsman, playing American football as a linebacker and ice hockey as a goalkeeper. When he graduated his father wanted him to study forestry at college but he favoured something more exciting. In 1956 he joined the US Marine Corps, where he took up boxing. Stationed in Okinawa, he became the Far East welterweight champion and on his discharge in 1959 announced his intention to become a professional fighter. His father was appalled and told him if he wanted to box he would have to do it at college.

Lane graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno in 1963 with a business degree and a victorious record of 11-1 as a pro fighter. He promptly retired and took to refereeing amateur bouts while working for the family bank, repossessing cars from those who could not repay their loans, before he enrolled in 1967 at law school. By 1970 he was a member of the Nevada bar and had progressed to refereeing professional fights, including Muhammad Ali's bout versus Bob Foster in 1972.

He had a tough reputation as a prosecutor and district attorney. It was alleged that he wore a gold noose on a chain around his neck to symbolise his disinclination towards plea bargaining. As a judge he kept a can of aerosol spray on his desk in his chambers labelled "Bullshit Repellent".

He is survived by Kaye, his wife of more than 50 years, and their sons Tommy and Terry, who are boxing promoters and partners in their father's company, Let's Get It On Promotions.

Of all the champions Lane oversaw in the ring, he rated Ernie Shavers the hardest puncher and Sugar Ray Leonard as the most "complete" fighter. Yet he took just as much pleasure in refereeing the most junior fight as he did in a world championship bout.

"Everything is discipline," he said. "I give the same energy and attention to a four-rounder as I do a million-dollar fight. In either case, that night is the most important in those fighters' careers."

Mills Lane, boxing referee, was born on November 12, 1937. He died after a long illness on December 6, 2022, aged 85

Court Circular

Buckingham Palace
7th December, 2022
The King today visited the Central Hall Westminster, Storey's Gate, London SW1, to celebrate the Fortieth Anniversary of Business in the Community and was received by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London (Sir Kenneth Olisa).

His Majesty viewed a display of four decades of the charity's work, meeting founders, members and beneficiaries of the organisation, recognising the charity's Race at Work initiative and hearing about the impact of the Seeing Is Believing programme.

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP (Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury) had an audience of The King this afternoon.

The Queen Consort this afternoon received children and young people from Helen and Douglas House and Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity and helped them to decorate the Christmas Tree at Clarence House.

The Prince of Wales, on behalf of The King, held an Investiture at Windsor Castle this afternoon.

Kensington Palace
7th December, 2022
The Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall this morning held a Meeting with the Duchy of Cornwall Finance Committee.

St James's Palace
7th December, 2022
The Countess of Wessex this morning arrived at Heathrow Airport, London, from the United States of America.

Mr Alexander Stonor was in attendance.

St James's Palace
7th December, 2022
The Princess Royal, Patron, Maritime UK, this morning chaired a Council Meeting at Watermen's Hall, 16-18 St Mary-at-Hill, London EC3.

Kensington Palace
7th December, 2022
The Duke of Gloucester, Grand Prior, the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, this afternoon attended an Installation and Investiture Ceremony at the Priory Church, St John's Square, London EC1.

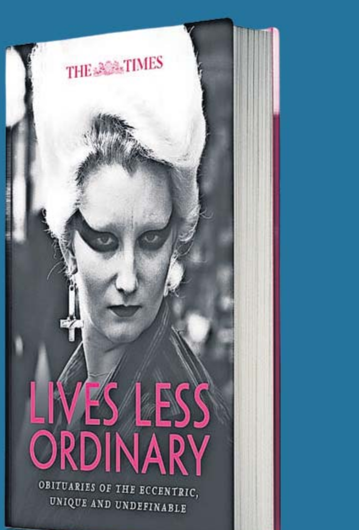
His Royal Highness, Patron, Canine Partners for Independence, this evening attended a Carol Service at St Paul's Church, 32A Wilton Place, London SW1.

St James's Palace
7th December, 2022
The Duke of Kent this morning visited Steam — Museum of the Great Western Railway, Fire Fly Avenue, Swindon, and was received by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Wiltshire (Mrs Peter Troughton).

His Royal Highness, Patron, British Computer Society, Chartered Institute for Information Technology, later visited the Society's Headquarters at 3 Newbridge Square, Swindon.

St James's Palace
7th December, 2022
Princess Alexandra this evening switched on the Christmas Lights and attended a Reception at the Travellers Club, 106 Pall Mall, London SW1, and was received by Mrs Geraldine Norris (Deputy Lieutenant of Greater London).

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THE TIMES

Births, Marriages and Deaths

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HER husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." Matthew 1.19-20 (NRSV)

Bible verses are provided by the Bible Society

Births

MOUNT-YOUNGER on 21st November 2022, to Arabella Younger and Benjamin Mount, a daughter, Matilda Maria.

Forthcoming Marriages

MR T. W. DAY
AND MISS O. C. I. MURPHY
The engagement is announced between Tom, son of Mr Keith Day of Droitwich and Ms Lesley Day of Worcester, and Olivia, daughter of Mr Stephen Murphy and Mrs Rachael Murphy of Bosham, West Sussex.

MR M. E. B. HUMPHREY
AND MISS K. J. O'CONNELL
The engagement is announced between Matthew Edward Bentley Humphrey, son of Peter, and the late Alison Humphrey, of Sheldwich, Kent, and Kate Julia, daughter of Ruth, and the late John O'Connell, of Hoylake, Wirral.

Marriages

MR B. PEREIRA
AND MRS H. PEREIRA-JOHNS
The marriage took place on 3rd December 2022, between Blayne and Hannah at St Giles', Ashtead, followed by a reception at the Tithe Barn, Burford Bridge. A wonderful celebration with family and friends.

Deaths

CATOVSKY Prof Daniel, world-renowned haematologist at the Royal Marsden Hospital and, latterly, emeritus professor at the Institute of Cancer Research, passed away, aged 85, at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital on 2nd December after a short illness. Beloved husband to the late Dame Prof Julia Polak, a much-loved father to Sebastian, Michael and the late Marina, and grandfather to Reuben and Noah, kind partner to Cristina, and a fantastic colleague to many around the world. Memorial donations in Daniel's name can be made to the Institute of Cancer Research.

DOWLING Audrey (née Jackaman) died peacefully on 1st November 2022, aged 95. The funeral took place on Wednesday 7th December at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church N11 1AA.

DUNN Penelope (Loppy) (née Howard Baker), much-loved mother of Nicolas Wills and Camilla, died peacefully at home aged 69, having lived with multiple sclerosis for many years with humour, courage and without complaint. Service of thanksgiving Tuesday 13th December, 2.30pm at the Church of St Bartholomew, Winstone GL7 7JU. No flowers please. Donations if desired to the Injured Jockey Fund and Multiple Sclerosis Society c/o A Slade & Son, Ridgeway House, 35 Dyer St, Cirencester, GL7 2PP.

FITZMAURICE Georgina died peacefully on 5th December 2022, aged 72, at St John's Hospice London, following a long illness, surrounded by her children Josiah Hamilton and Emma Malina, and grandchildren Dash, Milli and Stella. Private cremation to be followed by celebration of life in the spring. She will be dearly missed by all those who knew her.

FRAMPTON Walter John on 15th November 2022, aged 93. Much-loved husband of Mary, and father of Stephanie and Simon. His middle daughter Caroline pre-deceased him in 2021. He had eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Known to his family affectionately as "Ted", he led a full life as first a barrister and then a senior oil executive at BP. Educated at Westminster School and Oriel College, Oxford. He served in Malaya 1947-1949. Funeral to be held at St Mary's Church, Stoke-by-Nayland, 11am 16th December, donations to The Gurkha Welfare Trust.

HESLOP Guy Spenser on 5th December 2022, aged 100. Father to Julian, Clare and Nicola and Paps to Matthew, Louisa, Nadia, Bryony and Dylan. Funeral service will take place at the Surrey and Sussex Crematorium, Balcombe Road, Crawley RH10 3NQ on 19th December at 2pm.

KEMP Henry Victor Ingham passed away on 11th November 2022, aged 48. A beloved father, he will be sadly missed by his family and friends. A service will be held at Golders Green Crematorium on Monday, 12th December at 11am.

LIVINGSTONE Dr Jeremy Rae Braithwaite died peacefully on 19th November, aged 90. Beloved husband of Diana, adored father of Griz, Kate, Emma and Lucy, grandfather and great-grandfather. A celebration of Jeremy's life will take place on Monday 19th December at 5.30pm, St Mary's Cathedral, Palmerston Place, Edinburgh. No flowers, please. Donations if desired to the Alzheimer's Society.

LESLIE MELVILLE Pamela on 5th December 2022 at her flat in Windsor. Much-loved sister of Hamish and Fiona. Service to be announced.

PRODHAN Bimal Kumar on 25th November 2022, aged 85, suddenly and peacefully with family. Beloved husband of Monika, father to Georgina, Juliette and Oliver, and grandfather to Fergus, Charlotte, Amy and Edward. Funeral at The Oratory Church of St Aloysius, Oxford, at 12.30pm on 12th December. Donations to Oxfam welcome.

PACKER Ronald on 29th November 2022, aged 71. Ron passed away peacefully, surrounded by his family at Bethesda, Perth, Australia. A devoted father to his daughters Kirsty, Tory and Susannah. He will be much missed.

TEW Capt Ian died peacefully at his home in Milford on Sea, Hampshire, on Friday 18th November 2022, aged 79.

THOMPSON (MOIR) Jakki/Auntie Rotter passed away peacefully on 15th November 2022, aged 73, after a brave battle with cancer, at Trinity Hospice. Wife of the late Peter, sister of Barbara and the late Diana, aunt to Rebecca, Miranda, John and Sam and godmother to many. Private family funeral to be followed with a Service of Thanksgiving on 25th March 2023, at 2.30pm, at St Luke's Church in Battersea SW12 8RQ.

TOWLE Joan Evelyn, MBE, (née Barbour) passed away aged 91, on December 1st 2022, at home in St Austell, Cornwall, with her daughters, Kate and Alison, by her side. Joan will be sadly missed by family and friends. She touched many lives through years of dedicated voluntary and community work. A service to celebrate her life, to which everyone who knew her is warmly invited, will be held at Glynn Valley Crematorium, Bodmin, on Thursday December 22nd at 1.30pm. Streamed service available if unable to attend. Family flowers only please. Donations if desired please to Cruse Bereavement Support by retiring collection or c/o Bodmin Funeral Services, Old Wall Lodge, Castle Canyke Road PL31 1DU. Any enquiries 01208 78300.

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Legal Notices

IN PARLIAMENT

SESSION 2022–23

ROYAL ALBERT HALL BILL

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that application has been made to Parliament by The Corporation of the Hall of Arts and Sciences (the Corporation) for leave to introduce a Bill in this Session under the above name or short title.

The purpose of the Bill is to amend certain existing provisions relating to the annual contribution payable by Members of the Corporation ("the Members") towards the general purposes of the Royal Albert Hall ("the hall"); to make further provision regarding the exclusion of the Members from the hall; and to make provision for the sale of further seats and the exercise of certain rights in respect of Grand Tier boxes located on the first tier of the hall.

On and after 4 December 2022 a copy of the Bill may be inspected and copies of it obtained at the price of £3 each at the offices of:

Location	Opening Hours
The Stage Door Royal Albert Hall Kensington Gore South Kensington London SW7 2AP	Mondays to Sundays: 08:00 to 22:00 Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day and Bank Holidays: By prior arrangement (Telephone: 020 7589 3203)
BDB Pitmans LLP One Bartholomew Close London EC1A 7BL	Mondays to Fridays: 09:30 to 17:30 Saturdays, Sundays, Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day, Bank Holidays and 23 December 2022: Closed

A copy of the Bill may also be viewed from 4 December 2022 at the Corporation's website: https://www.royalalberthall.com/about-the-hall/the-charity/about-the-charity/.

Objection to the Bill may be made by depositing a Petition against it in the Office of the Clerk of the Parliaments, if the Bill is introduced in the House of Lords, or in the Private Bill Office of the House of Commons, if the Bill is introduced in that House. The latest date for the deposit of such a Petition in the First House will be 30 January 2023 if the Bill originates in the House of Commons, or 6 February 2023 if it originates in the House of Lords. The latest date for deposit of such a Petition in the Second House will be the tenth day after the first reading of the Bill in that House or, if the House is not sitting on that day, on the next day on which that House sits.

Further information regarding petitioning may be found on the Parliament's webpage at: https://www.parliament.uk/about/how/laws/bills/private/privatebillpetition/
or by contacting either—

(a) the Office of the Clerk of the Parliaments, House of Lords:
E-mail: hlprivatebills@parliament.uk
Telephone: 020 7219 3231

(b) the Private Bill Office, House of Commons:
E-mail: prbohoc@parliament.uk
Telephone: 020 7219 6008

(c) BDB Pitmans LLP:
E-mail: pamthompson@bdbpitmans.com
Telephone: 020 7783 3437

Dated this 1st day of December 2022

BDB PITMANS LLP
One Bartholomew Close
London EC1A 7BL
Solicitors and Parliamentary Agents

Fellows

The following were admitted as Fellows of the Royal Society of Chemistry between 11th September 2021 and 7th September 2022 and are entitled to use the letters FRSC:

Fellow (FRSC)
Carlo Adamo
Faruk Ahmed
V. Alagarsamy
Amir Alahmed
Mohamed Alkordi
Futwan Al-Mohanna
Aram Amassian
Liang An
H C Ananda Murthy
Shanmugharaj Andikkadu Masilamani
Tim Arnold
Saket Asthana
Masakazu Atobe
Elapavalooru Babu
Sherilee Backman
Sangram Bagh
Indra Bahadur
Geetha Balakrishna
Kevin Belfield
Teng Ben
Richard Bennett
Goncalo Bernardes
Manish Bhalla
Sandip Bharate
Mashooq Bhat
Bhavesh Bhavsar
Krishna Bisetty
Christine Bladon
Edward Brothers
Hilary Brown
Walter Cabri
Qiong Cai
Xiaoyu Cao
Wayne Carter
Alessandro Caselli
Chia-Yuan Chen
Libao Chen
Meiwan Chen
Shaowei Chen
Tao Chen
Wei Chen
Chi Ming Cheung
Phillip Choi
Devasish Chowdhury
Suteesh Chumber
Tanya Church
Mark Collins
Maurice Collins
Helen Cooke
Marc-Olivier Coppens
Francesca D'Anna
Chandan Das
Pralay Das
Sujoy Das
Przemyslaw Data
Michael Deary
Armando Del Rio Hernandez
Don Devoe
Sundeep Dhawan
Andrew Dicks
Lawrence Dollimore
Huanli Dong
Yingchao Dong
Christian Dowdeswell
Filip Du Prez
David Fairen-Jimenez
Xianfeng Fan
Baizeng Fang
Wang Feng
Simon Fitzgerald
Thomas Fleming
Richard Frazier
Qingyu Gao
Pedro Garcia
John Gardiner
Jeremiah Gassensmith
Junjie Ge
Jin Geng
Jan Genzer
Cristina Giordano
Jeffrey Glover
Pola Goldberg Oppenheimer
Unnikrishnan Gopalakrishna Panicker
Kunnel Gopchandran
Anilkumar Gopinathan
Xiaodong Guo
Govind Gupta
Raju Gupta
Nikos Hadjichristidis
Debasish Haldar
James Harburn
Andrew Hard
David Harding
David Harrison
Swapnali Hazarika
Xiao-Peng He
Yan-Bing He
Trevor Hinchcliffe
Wai Onn Hong
Srinivas Hotha
Haitao Huang
Ru-Jin Huang
Xuhui Huang
Yiyong Huang
David Huggins
Michael Hughes
Irshad Hussain
Tanya Hutter
Alan Hutton
Enrique Iglesia
Sahika Inal
Andrew Jamieson
Naveed Janjua
Malika Jeffries-El
Bikash Jena
Guiyuan Jiang
Shuhong Jiao
Hiroshi Jinnai
Walter Johnstone
Alex Jones
David Jones
Robert Mark Jones
Tanja Junkers
Oana Jurchescu
Tanmoy Karak
Siva Kumar Kasibhatta
Nataraj Kav
John Kennedy L
Raju Khan
Harsha Kharkwal
Bumjoon Kim
Ji-Seon Kim
Jong Seung Kim
Bartlomiej Kolodziejczyk
Mahesh Kumar
Raj Kumar
Chennuru Lakshmi Narayana
Sharad Lande
Kenneth Leung
Matthew Lewis
Feng Li
Jun Li
Li Li
Qing Li
Shao Li
Ying Li
Yu Li
Zong-Hong Lin
Xing Yi Ling
R. Daniel Little
Xuewei Liu
Xuqing Liu
Bimlesh Lochab
Eriketi Loizidou
Yi Long
Yen-Wen Lu
Jianmin Ma
Sukhendu Mandal
Ayyar Manikandan
Imowo Marcus
Pradip Mascharak
Robert Mathers
Tim Mays
Abbie Mclaughlin
Rachel Mills
Sergiy Minko
Rajneesh Misra
Shaikh Mobin
Sankar Moi
Jean-Christophe Monbaliu
Monoj Kumar Mondal
Saptarshi Mukherjee
Balaram Mukhopadhyay
Subrata Mukhopadhyay
Christopher Murray
Zvp Murthy
Ramaiah Muthyala
Tharamani Nagaiah
Arvind Singh Negi
José Antonio Odriozola
Olumayokun Olajide
Ganiyat Kehinde Oloyede
Eswaran Padmanabhan
Parimal Pal
Santanu Kumar Pal
Cheng Heng Pang
Huan Pang
Deepak Pant
Kulamani Parida
Shalin Parikh
Mauro Pasta
Bhaven Patel
Trushar Patel
David Paterson
Shengjie Peng
Thomas Pesnot
Jean-Philip Piquemal
Keith Polden
Shalini Prasad
Saffron Price-Finnerty
Polina Prokopovich
Pradipta Purkayastha
Jeffrey Pyun
Liang Qiao
Zewei Quan
Michael Quigley
Mohammad Qureshi
Edwin Raj
V. Samuel Raj
Vaidhyanathan Ramanathan
Karthik Ramasamy
S. S. V. Ramasastry
Dinesh Rangappa
Ravindranath Rathore
Simon Rees
Yurong Ren
Olivier Renaudet
Des Richardson
Gareth Rowlands
Sudip Roy
Drew Royal
Andrew Russell
Jeremy Rutter
Aamer Saeed
Mansoor Saeed
Suresh Sagadevan
Pranjal Saikia
Chivukula Sastri
Harumi Sato
Peter Seeberger
Suzanne Seleem
Karuna Shanker
Sadish Kumar Shanmugam
Yuichi Shimakawa
Srikantaswamy Shivanna
Meisha Shofner
Debbie Silvester-Dean
Martyn Sime
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Narpinder Singh
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Law

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Justice ministers from the G7 nations signed a pledge of solidarity with Kyiv last week as the conflict in Ukraine rages on

War debts: aggressor states and reparations

This year's Times Law Awards essay competition looks at recovering costs. **Catherine Baksi** reports

As Russia's invasion and the war in Ukraine drags on into the winter, the international community is considering how to deliver justice once the peace comes — or even before.

Justice ministers from across the G7 nations signed a pledge of solidarity with Kyiv last week, signalling their commitment to securing justice for alleged atrocities.

The attorney-general, Victoria Prentis, signed the Berlin declaration on behalf of the UK. It seeks to strengthen cross-border responses to alleged Russian war crimes at an international level and to increase effectiveness and communication between investigative authorities.

Proposals in the declaration include the nomination of national contact points for co-ordination of the prosecution of international crimes to complement the work of existing well-established mechanisms, including Eurojust and the Genocide Network.

A draft resolution has been circulating at the UN in New York for the creation of a Nuremberg-style tribunal to hold the Russian leadership accountable for crimes of aggression.

The International Criminal Court (ICC), based in the Hague, has begun investigating allegations of war crimes in Ukraine, but cannot prosecute the crime of aggression because Russia is not a signatory to the treaty that created the court. The EU has proposed the creation of a UN-backed special tribunal to prosecute crimes in Ukraine.

While the war in Ukraine is the most high-profile present conflict, having dominated the international agenda since the Kremlin invaded in February this year, there are at least 20 wars being waged around the world. Others include the internal conflict in Myanmar, the insurgency in Afghanistan, the Mexican drug war, the Yemeni civil war and the Ethiopian civil conflict.

It is against that background that the subject has been set for this year's Times Law awards essay competition, sponsored by the barristers' chambers, One Essex Court. This year's question asks: "Should states and private parties be entitled to recover reparations from aggressor states, and if so, how?"

'Technology increased the precision of states' aggressive power'

Henry Forbes Smith, an international litigator and arbitrator at the set and one of the competition judges, said that the question was timely, not only because of Russia's invasion and other conflicts, but because of wider technological and political developments.

"Technology has increased the precision of the aggressive power of states, their individual awareness of whom they harm, and the ability of those they harm to prove what happened," Forbes Smith said. Aggressor states, the barrister said, may have property all over the world, which injured states and private parties may claim in local courts in reparation. They may, however, be denied access to justice in the courts of the state where the aggression occurred and there may be no international tribunal in which injured private parties could access justice.

Not all states are subject to the compulsory jurisdiction of the ICC, and victims of state aggression, both states and private parties, Forbes Smith said, were often without a forum in which they were entitled to obtain reparation, which was a denial of justice.

"Questions therefore arise as to whether states and private parties should have an entitlement to recover reparations from aggressor states, either in national courts or in international tribunals, but not in neither, and without denial of justice," he said.

Philippe Sands KC, director of the Centre for International Courts and Tribunals at University College London and a member of 11KBW, argued that there was no rule of international law that stopped any victims, individual or corporate, from being able to recover in circumstances where manifestly illegal force had been used.

As an example, he pointed to the UN compensation commission, created in 1991, which processed claims and paid billions of dollars in compensation to individuals, corporates and states for the losses and damage suffered as a result of Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait, which started the Gulf war.

The issue, Sands said, was finding a mechanism to entertain such claims.

The essay competition is open to all students registered with UK higher education institutes, pupil barristers and trainee solicitors. Essays should be no more than 1,000 words and must be received by midday on January 16, 2023. There are more than £10,000 of prizes on offer to the six finalists, whose entries will be read by a judging panel of senior figures, including Lord Sales, a justice of the UK Supreme Court, and Lord Grabiner KC, the head of chambers at One Essex Court.

The awards will be presented at a dinner ceremony at the Guildhall in the City of London in May.

Details are online at oeclaw.co.uk/times-law-awards

Bill of rights would permanently damage Britain's reputation

Edward Garnier KC
Comment

With Dominic Raab back in office as the justice secretary — after his brief sabbatical during Liz Truss's premiership — he has revived his bill of rights.

The proposed legislation has had various iterations over the past decade or so, but this version — like its predecessors — appears to be an answer to a problem that does not exist. It nonetheless creates some of its own; most fundamentally, Raab asserts that his bill will allow UK courts to ignore rulings of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg while remaining committed to the European Convention on Human Rights.

That is nonsense on stilts. Britain is either a member and bound by the terms of our membership — including accepting the decisions of the Strasbourg court that affect the UK — or we leave the convention and cease to be bound by the treaty.

There are plenty of good legal, reputational, diplomatic and economic reasons for us to remain, but if the justice secretary thinks that our membership of the court — and obedience to its judgments in cases in which we are a party — damages our national interests, he should advocate our departure. Other Conservatives have done so.

Membership of an international treaty organisation — be it Nato, the World Trade Organisation, the EU or the human rights convention — self-evidently requires an acceptance of the terms of the requisite treaty. That is how international treaties work. Each signatory has through prior negotiation agreed the terms, including — in the case of the European Convention — that disputes between the citizen and a member state about the application and extent of convention rights are ultimately to be decided by the European Court of Human Rights.

As a nation that did not accept the limitations of continued membership of the EU, Britain left the organisation. But for some as yet inadequately explained reason, Raab's bill of rights wants us to be only a bit pregnant.

The bill will require UK courts to apply an alternative interpretation of what the European convention means, unilaterally doing away with the principle that all signatories are bound by the same rules. While we already have a wide discretion under the doctrine of the margin of appreciation — which permits national circumstances to add flexibility to UK decisions and the court's view of them — the bill of rights seems to demand a special rule of interpretation just for us.

It once might have been difficult to believe that in mid-November, when the UK received its universal periodic review at the Human Rights Council, there was a long list of critical interventions from other convention states about the government's proposals to scrap the Human Rights Act. The government's obsession with the European court must seem bizarre, at best, to our allies across Europe who remain committed to the international rules-based system on which so much of our trade and diplomacy depends.

Our international standing as an upholder and exporter of the rule of law is at risk of being irreparably damaged — and that damage is already under way. Governments — including those in Belgium, Canada, Germany and even Ukraine, despite the military support it has received from us — have expressed concern over the bill of rights.

In June, Michelle Bachelet, the UN high commissioner for human rights at the time, criticised the plans. This was a first for the UK to be mentioned in this context.

We all know the convention's history and origins — a treaty largely drafted by British lawyers after the Second World War to assist in the rebuilding a democratic Europe that adhered to the rule of law. It was designed to break the cycle of conflict and ensure countries were bound by minimum standards to secure a stable and prosperous peace. Only one country has ever voluntarily left the convention — Greece, in 1969, to avoid it being expelled for gross violations including torture after the 1967 military coup; it rejoined in 1974 on the restoration of democracy. Russia was expelled after its illegal invasion of Ukraine.

Given that last year only 0.17 per cent of cases before the Strasbourg court related to the UK, and most led to judgments in the government's favour, it is reasonable to ask whether Raab's dissatisfaction with the convention and the court has more to do with dog-whistle politics than the application of jurisprudence in the UK.

Anything prefixed with the word "Europe" is for some a catalyst for irrationalism, but if we alter our relationship with the convention and the court as the bill demands, the likely consequence will be more, not fewer, applications to Strasbourg by UK citizens or those affected by the acts and omissions by the British state. That does not seem like a worthwhile dividend for the political investment that Raab wants us to put into his project.

Lord Garnier KC was the solicitor-general between 2010 and 2012

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In conversation
Senior clerk Michelle Greene on succeeding in a 'closed' profession
thetimes.co.uk

Campaign for copyright update

Jonathan Ames

"I'm a lot poorer but I still have a spring in my step," Anna Pasternak told *The Times* just hours after a judge ordered her to pay 99 per cent of a rival's legal fees in a copyright battle that caught the wider popular imagination.

It is estimated that the author — who is the great-niece of the Nobel prizewinning creator of *Doctor Zhivago*, Boris Pasternak — faces a total legal bill of about £2 million after losing a claim against Lara Prescott, an American novelist.

The legal case was almost as epic as the tale of love during the Russian revolution that the book and subsequent David Lean film related.

The gist of the author's claim was that Prescott had allegedly lifted without credit sections of Patsternak's 2016 non-fiction work, *Lara: The Untold Love Story and the Inspiration for Doctor Zhivago*, for her 2019 novel, *The Secrets We Kept*.

During a High Court trial in London, Mr Justice Edwin Johnson heard that both books detailed the relationship between Boris Pasternak and Olga Ivinskaya, who inspired the character Lara Antipova, played by Julie Christie in the 1965 film adaptation of *Doctor Zhivago*.

Pasternak told the court that in 2019 she and her husband had attended a drinks party hosted by Prescott's publishers, where the American author allegedly told them that she had a copy of *Lara* and added: "I based the love story of Boris and Olga on your book."

In October the judge ruled in favour of Prescott, saying that Pasternak's book was based on real events that were woven into a story devised by the author, while in contrast, Prescott's novel was marketed as a spy thriller. The judge found that there was no evidence that Prescott's work had been copied from Pasternak's book, and he emphasised that her "use of odd words or phrase[s] or other detail" from *Lara* was not sufficient to support the allegation that she was guilty of infringing copyright.


Omar Sharif and Julie Christie star in the 1965 film adaption of Doctor Zhivago

Pasternak had a partial victory in the ruling. She had alleged that Prescott had further infringed copyright in an excerpt from an English translation of the French edition of a Russian-language book that had been written by the daughter of Boris Pasternak's mistress. The copyright in the translation had been assigned to Anna Pasternak by the translator.

At the trial, Prescott admitted that she had copied the excerpt from *Lara*, but her lawyers argued that doing so fell within a legal exemption to infringement. The judge accepted that Prescott's use of the translation amounted to "fair dealing" and that she had acted in good faith — but he ruled that she had not sufficiently acknowledged Pasternak's work as the source.

All of which brings us back to the "spring" in Pasternak's step. Pasternak, who has published a range of non-fiction books, including *Princess in Love* in 1994, which detailed Diana, Princess of Wales's love affair with the guardsman James Hewitt, said she would "campaign for an update on the 1988 copyright law in favour of non-fiction writers for as long as it takes".

Pasternak says she would begin lobbying politicians in January for what she described as "Lara's law". The details of how she proposes to reform the law are still a work in progress, but William Miles, a partner at the law firm Briffa, which represented Pasternak in her battle with Prescott, explained that "copyright is an ever-developing area of the law … [and it has] yet to catch up with the proliferation of historical non-fiction".

Miles added that "although some copyright infringement was found in this case, more needs to be done to protect non-fiction writers … Anna will continue to fight for this and I hope that the work of non-fiction writers can be treated with the respect it deserves".

Other lawyers are more sceptical. Roy Crozier, a partner at Clarke Willmott, argued that the present Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 provided sufficient protection for non-fiction writers.

Crozier said that the problem with Pasternak's claim was that "simply put there was no copying".

He said that copyright had always struck a balance between the rights of authors and the users of their works. "Pasternak may not like where that balance is but if [she] is seeking some kind of enhanced protection over and above current copyright law it is difficult to see what form this is to take and how it would be fair to users of copyright works," he said,

Shireen Peermohamed, a partner at Harbottle & Lewis, said that the judge in the case came to a "meticulous and painstaking" ruling.

She said that the fact Pasternak and Prescott "were both looking at the same historical events meant that there was going to be some similarity — but that doesn't amount to copyright infringement".

Mark Stephens, a media partner at Howard Kennedy, agreed that copyright around historical events was difficult and that even some lawyers had misconceptions about the field. "The narrative and the specific words of a story can be protected but the wider themes and the architecture of a historical story are not," Stephens said.

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Lawyer of the week Patrick Tomison

Patrick Tomison, a tenant at Outer Temple Chambers, acted for Rita Jandu, who worked for Marks & Spencer for more than 20 years and was made redundant because of mistakes in her emails. Jandu, who is dyslexic, claimed unfair dismissal and disability discrimination. The central London employment tribunal awarded her more than £50,000, ruling that her employers ignored the impact of dyslexia on her work.

What were the biggest hurdles you had to overcome in this case? We had to prove the impact of her dyslexia on her work. The preparation of my instructing solicitor and the evidence of my client meant that my job was straightforward. The lesson from this case: don't make assumptions about the impact of a disability on a person. Everyone is different.



What is the best decision you have taken as a lawyer? Going paperless. The first trial without paper was unnerving, but the convenience of electronic bundles outweighs the comfort of paper.

What are the best and worst elements of being a lawyer? The best is representing clients such as this one — having a route to success and executing it. The worst is when that does not work.

Who do you most admire in the law? My first supervisor, Andrew Allen KC and my clerk, Nick Levett.

What is the best advice you have received? Prepare your draft closing submissions before preparing your cross-examination. That way, you know exactly why you are asking every question.

What is the funniest thing that has happened in your job? A client tried to claim damages from a mobile phone company because, due to the poor phone signal, he couldn't arrange to spend less time with his wife — so he was "forced to spend the entire holiday" with her. The judge was not satisfied that his holiday had been "ruined", and refused to award damages.

What law would you enact? Legal aid, or some form of one-way costs-shifting, for claimants in employment proceedings.

What is your favourite book? Recently, *In the Seeing Hands of Others* by my friend Nat Ogle.

Linda Tsang
l_tsang@hotmail.com

OUT OF COURT

The cases, the chatter, the chaos: what's really going on in the law

Warning for Bar watchdog

Troubles mount for the Bar Standards Board (BSB), which oversees about 17,500 practising barristers in England and Wales. In the past few weeks the board has apologised to one KC over the handling of a complaint against her, and was told by a senior-junior barrister that he plans to sue it after a fine the regulator imposed on him was quashed.

Now the Legal Services Board (LSB), the regulators' regulator, has warned the BSB that it is considering engaging its "formal powers" in relation to the alleged poor performance. Helen Phillips, the LSB's chairwoman, wrote to the Bar regulator informing officials that they had until December 6 "to demonstrate that [they] recognised the seriousness of the situation".

A spokesman for the BSB said: "Sometimes our assessment of risk is simply different from that of the LSB." He said that the two sides had agreed on an extended deadline and were still talking. "We would not expect these discussions to result in any need for… formal action," he added.

Dispute over 'Slapps'

Dan Neidle, a former tax partner at Clifford Chance, has for the past three months been having a running row with Nadhim Zahawi, the cabinet minister without portfolio, and his law firm Osborne Clarke.

Neidle, who now runs the think tank Tax Policy Associates, made allegations about Zahawi's tax affairs, which he has adamantly denied. Neidle has said that in the process of those denials Osborne Clarke sent a letter that Neidle described as a Slapp — a letter threatening a strategic lawsuit against public participation.

Last week Neidle pointed out that the Solicitors Regulation Authority had issued a warning to law firms that Slapps were unacceptable — and he has now referred Osborne Clarke to the regulator. Osborne Clarke had no comment.

Chief executive resigns

Staying with lawyer regulation, the top bod at the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal has resigned after four years in post. The departure of Geraldine Newbold, the tribunal's chief executive, came a fortnight after officials acknowledged that the tribunal was being forced to relocate next year because it had been thrown out of its premises just off Ludgate Circus, London. It has had to ask the profession for an extra £1.1 million to cover moving costs.

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Weather

Today Wintry showers across much of Ireland and northern Britain, largely dry in south. Max 4C (39F), min -9C (16F)

Around Britain

Key: b=bright, c=cloud, d=drizzle, pc=partly cloudy du=dull, f=fair, fg=fog, h=hail, m=mist, r=rain, sh=showers, sl=sleet, sn=snow, s=sun, t=thunder *=previous day **=data not available

	Temp C midday yesterday		Rain mm 24 hrs to 5pm yesterday	Sun hr*
Aberdeen	3	C	6.0	2.2
Aberporth	3	C	0.0	4.2
Anglesey	5	C	0.2	1.1
Aviemore	2	R	0.4	0.3
Barnstaple	8	S	0.0	**
Bedford	3	C	0.2	**
Belfast	3	C	0.2	1.0
Birmingham	2	S	0.2	**
Bournemouth	4	S	0.0	1.6
Bridlington	4	C	13.6	**
Bristol	3	C	0.0	2.2
Camborne	6	S	0.0	**
Cardiff	**	C	1.8	1.6
Edinburgh	4	PC	0.0	1.5
Eskdalemuir	3	PC	0.0	**
Glasgow	3	PC	0.0	4.0
Hereford	3	C	0.0	**
Herstmonceux	5	PC	0.2	1.0
Ipswich	2	PC	0.0	3.7
Isle of Man	6	PC	0.0	4.3
Isle of Wight	**	**	**	**
Jersey	7	PC	4.4	3.0
Keswick	2	S	0.0	**
Kinloss	3	R	2.0	0.6
Leeds	1	S	0.0	**
Lerwick	0	SL	0.6	0.5
Leuchars	4	PC	0.0	2.4
Lincoln	**	**	0.0	0.8
Liverpool	3	S	0.0	**
London	4	B	0.0	4.1
Lyneham	3	C	0.2	2.5
Manchester	2	S	0.0	2.5
Margate	4	**	0.0	**
Milford Haven	4	PC	0.0	**
Newcastle	2	C	0.6	**
Nottingham	4	S	0.2	0.4
Orkney	4	C	2.2	0.1
Oxford	3	S	0.0	**
Plymouth	7	PC	0.0	**
Portland	5	PC	0.0	**
Scilly, St Mary's	8	S	0.0	**
Shoreham	3	C	0.0	1.9
Shrewsbury	3	S	0.2	0.1
Snowdonia	4	C	0.4	**
Southend	3	C	0.0	1.2
South Uist	5	C	0.4	**
Stornoway	3	C	3.2	0.2
Tiree	6	PC	0.6	0.5
Whitehaven	0	S	0.0	0.0
Wick	3	C	0.6	**
Yeovilton	4	S	0.0	1.4

The world

All readings local midday yesterday

Alicante	20	PC	Madeira	21	B
Amsterdam	7	SH	Madrid	11	C
Athens	15	B	Malaga	16	PC
Auckland	20	C	Mallorca	17	B
Bahrain	26	PC	Malta	21	S
Bangkok	31	B	Melbourne	19	B
Barbados	30	PC	Mexico City	23	S
Barcelona	13	PC	Miami	28	PC
Beijing	5	S	Milan	7	S
Beirut	20	PC	Mombasa	32	PC
Belgrade	7	R	Montreal	7	R
Berlin	3	B	Moscow	-9	S
Bermuda	22	SH	Mumbai	32	S
Bordeaux	6	S	Munich	4	B
Brussels	6	SH	Nairobi	24	PC
Bucharest	5	DU	Naples	19	PC
Budapest	5	B	New Orleans	26	B
Buenos Aires	34	S	New York	14	R
Cairo	20	PC	Nice	13	PC
Calcutta	24	S	Nicosia	21	PC
Canberra	23	S	Oslo	-7	S
Cape Town	23	PC	Paris	6	B
Chicago	6	S	Perth	27	S
Copenhagen	1	B	Prague	2	B
Corfu	17	PC	Reykjavik	-3	S
Delhi	21	S	Riga	-2	SN
Dubai	29	S	Rio de Janeiro	28	R
Dublin	5	PC	Riyadh	21	S
Faro	17	R	Rome	15	B
Florence	14	B	San Francisco	13	PC
Frankfurt	7	B	Santiago	33	S
Geneva	4	B	São Paulo	23	B
Gibraltar	17	B	Seoul	9	PC
Helsinki	0	SN	Seychelles	30	PC
Hong Kong	19	PC	Singapore	32	SH
Honolulu	28	B	St Petersburg	-4	SN
Istanbul	13	B	Stockholm	-6	S
Jerusalem	21	PC	Sydney	25	S
Johannesburg	23	S	Tel Aviv	21	PC
Kuala Lumpur	32	PC	Tenerife	21	R
Kyiv	**	**	Tokyo	13	PC
Lanzarote	22	PC	Vancouver	2	R
Las Palmas	23	PC	Venice	9	PC
Lima	19	DU	Vienna	6	B
Lisbon	12	R	Warsaw	2	PC
Los Angeles	16	B	Washington	8	M
Luxor	22	S	Zurich	3	B

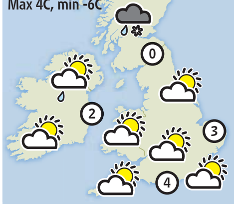
Five days ahead

A cold period with sunny spells and showery rain, perhaps turning heavy and wintry in places

Tomorrow

A mostly dry day with sunny spells and the odd isolated shower along the coast of Northern Ireland. Some showers moving into northern Scotland and turning wintry.

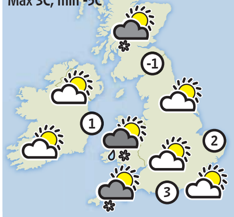
Max 4C, min -6C



Saturday

Dry with sunny spells for much of Ireland and eastern Britain. Showery rain perhaps turning wintry across northern and western Britain.

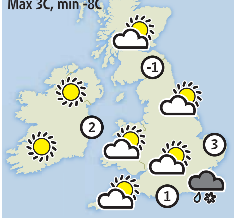
Max 3C, min -5C



Sunday

A dry day with prolonged sunny spells across Ireland and much of Britain. Bright spells and perhaps wintry showers in southeast England.

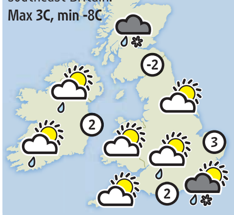
Max 3C, min -8C



Monday

Mainly dry with sunny spells and a chance of showers across most of southern Britain and Ireland. Wintry showers across northern and southeast Britain.

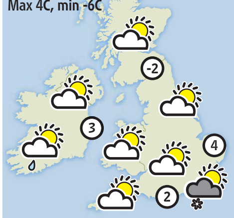
Max 3C, min -8C



Tuesday

A dry day for most with sunny spells and the odd shower across southern Ireland. A few showers turning wintry in southeast England.

Max 4C, min -6C



The Times weather page is provided by Weatherquest

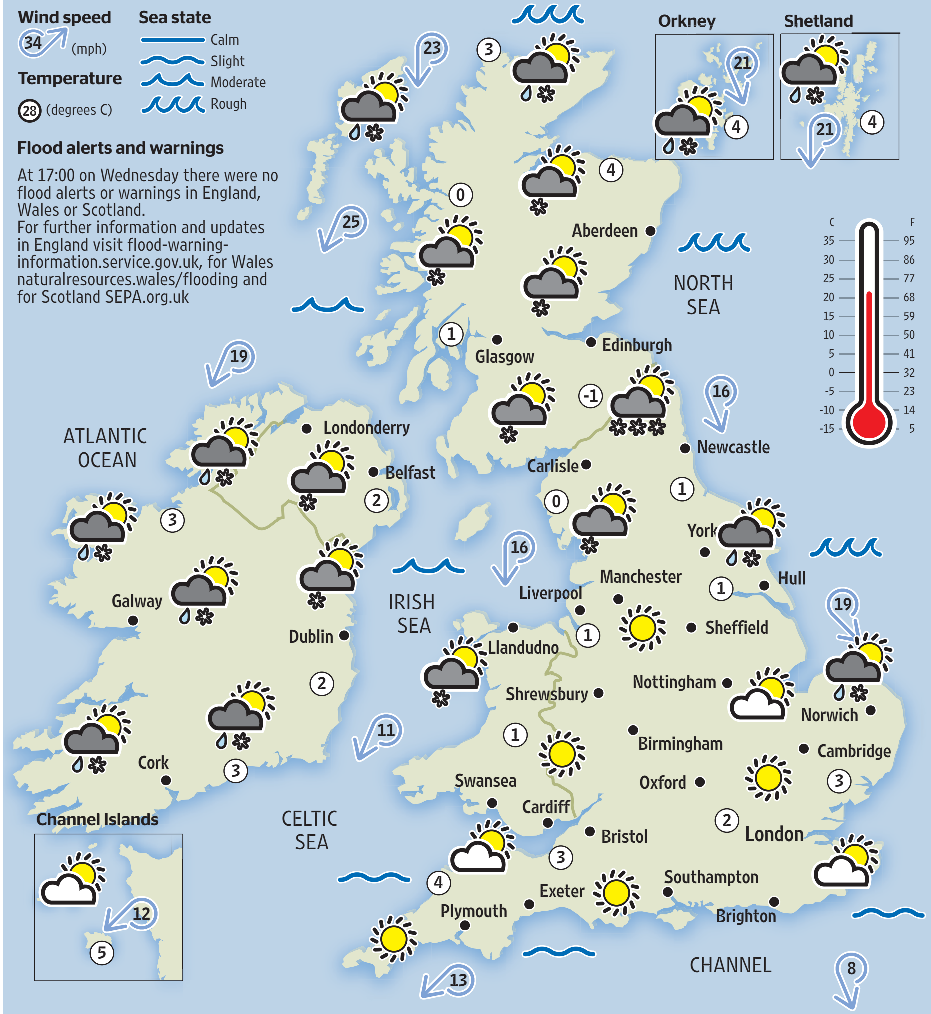
Wind speed 34 (mph)

Sea state Calm, Slight, Moderate, Rough

Temperature 28 (degrees C)

Flood alerts and warnings

At 17:00 on Wednesday there were no flood alerts or warnings in England, Wales or Scotland.
For further information and updates in England visit flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk, for Wales naturalresources.wales/flooding and for Scotland SEPA.org.uk

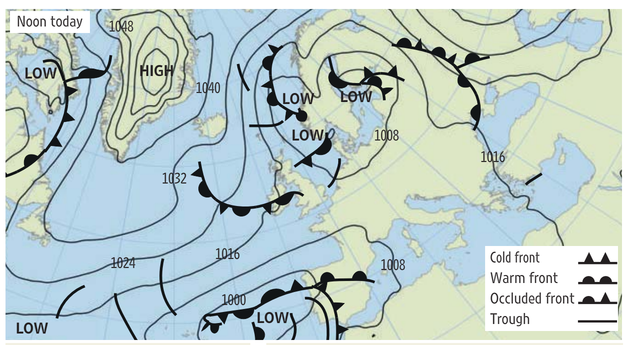


General situation: Mainly dry with sunny spells in southwest and central Britain, wintry showers elsewhere.
SW Eng, Cen S Eng, SE Eng, London, S Wales, E Mids, W Mids, Channel Is: Mostly dry with sunny spells and the odd isolated shower in the southwest through the afternoon. Light north to northwesterly winds. Maximum 4C (39F), minimum -6C (21F).
E Anglia, E Eng, Cen N Eng, NW Eng, N Wales, Lake District, IoM: Bright spells and isolated showers, becoming more frequent and wintry by the afternoon. Light northwesterly winds, perhaps moderate at times. Maximum 3C (37F), minimum -8C (18F).
N Isles, NE Scotland, NW Scotland, Aberdeen, Moray Firth: Bright spells and wintry showers throughout the day with a brief dry spell in the early afternoon. Light to moderate north to northwesterly winds. Maximum 4C (39F), minimum -3C (27F).
Republic of Ireland, N Ireland: Largely unsettled with showery rain falling as sleet and snow through the morning. Some frost patches lingering through the day in the south. Light north to northwesterly winds. Maximum 3C (37F), minimum -5C (23F).
Cen Highland, Edinburgh and Dundee, Argyll, Glasgow, Borders, SW Scotland, NE Eng: Bright spells and snow showers, heaviest across northeast England by midday. Light to moderate north to northwesterly winds, perhaps fresh over higher ground. Maximum 2C (36F), minimum -9C (16F).

Tides

Tidal predictions. Heights in metres

Today		Ht		Ht
Aberdeen	01:02	4.1	13:21	4.2
Avonmouth	06:59	12.7	19:22	12.6
Belfast	11:08	3.5	23:29	3.4
Cardiff	06:48	11.7	19:12	11.7
Devonport	05:31	5.4	17:49	5.2
Dover	11:05	6.5	23:25	6.5
Dublin	11:35	4.0	23:48	3.8
Falmouth	04:59	5.0	17:19	4.8
Greenock	00:08	3.5	12:17	3.6
Harwich	11:35	3.9	23:59	3.9
Holyhead	10:15	5.5	22:33	5.3
Hull	05:58	7.2	18:19	7.2
Leith	02:20	5.3	14:40	5.3
Liverpool	11:01	8.9	23:18	8.9
London Bridge	01:34	6.7	13:46	6.9
Lowestoft	09:16	2.4	21:40	2.5
Milford Haven	06:02	6.6	18:22	6.6
Morecambe	11:11	9.0	23:28	8.9
Newhaven	10:59	6.5	23:24	6.4
Newquay	04:53	6.7	17:13	6.6
Oban	05:20	3.9	17:43	3.9
Penzance	04:29	5.3	16:46	5.2
Portsmouth	11:20	4.6	23:46	4.5
Shoreham	11:11	6.1	23:35	6.0
Southampton	00:28	4.3	10:18	4.3
Swansea	06:09	9.0	18:30	9.0
Tees	03:22	5.2	15:43	5.3
Weymouth	06:29	2.1	18:56	1.9



Synoptic situation

An occluded front associated with a low-pressure system over southern Norway will bring southward moving scattered showers across central Britain through the day, some turning heavy and wintry around midday. An occluded front across the western British Isles will bring further scattered showers, perhaps becoming wintry over higher ground.

Highs and lows

24hrs to 5pm yesterday

Warmest: Chivenor, Devon, 8.3C
Coldest: Cairngorm, Inverness-shire, -6.0C
Wettest: Bridlington, Humberside, 13.6mm
Sunniest: Ronaldsway, 4.3hrs*

Sun and moon

For Greenwich
Sun rises: 07.52
Sun sets: 15.51
Moon rises: 15.41
Moon sets: 09.32 Fri
Third Quarter: December 16

Hours of darkness

Aberdeen	15:57-08:04
Belfast	16:28-08:03
Birmingham	16:24-07:35
Cardiff	16:34-07:36
Exeter	16:39-07:33
Glasgow	16:14-08:04
Liverpool	16:23-07:45
London	16:21-07:23
Manchester	16:20-07:42
Newcastle	16:09-07:48
Norwich	16:10-07:23
Penzance	16:50-07:39
Sheffield	16:17-07:39

Weather Eye
Paul Simons



We are at the mercy of the weather this winter. Energy is in short supply just as the season has arrived bitterly cold, and the immediate outlook is carrying on cold and calm. Gas supplies from Russia have been cut off and imports of French electricity have been hit by problems with their nuclear plants. A meeting of the Royal Meteorological Society heard how wind power has been hit by calmer conditions, sunshine is too weak for solar power and hydroelectric generators such as in Norway have suffered reservoir shortages after a long drought. And the cold is widespread across Europe and Asia, sending the demand for gas rocketing.

But long-range forecasts predicted the cold start several weeks ago. The EU did a good job at filling gas stores faster than expected, even as Russian supplies began to dwindle and those gas stores are now being used — but for how long will they last? A big concern is if there is a cold end to winter, when gas stores are depleted but needed for heating. Fortunately, the seasonal outlook points to a mild, wet and windy February and early spring, which would help ease demands for gas as well as boost wind power.

A cold snap could still strike, though, especially if the stratosphere over the Arctic goes into turmoil. These stratospheric upsets can be reliably forecast two to three weeks in advance, and even in long-range forecasts there are warning signs of trouble some two months ahead.

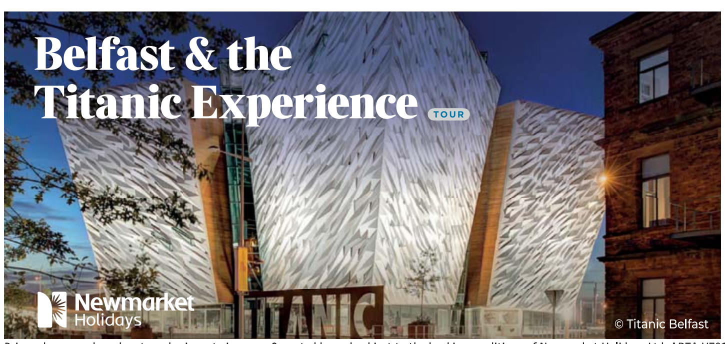
For the first time, the Met Office also issued an outlook for average wind speeds over the whole winter as the demand from wind power generators has grown. "Forecasts of wind speeds over northwest Europe are incredibly skilful, one of the most predictable aspects of the average winter weather to forecast," explained Adam Scaife at the Met Office. And over this winter the outlook is for near-average wind speed, despite the calm conditions this month.

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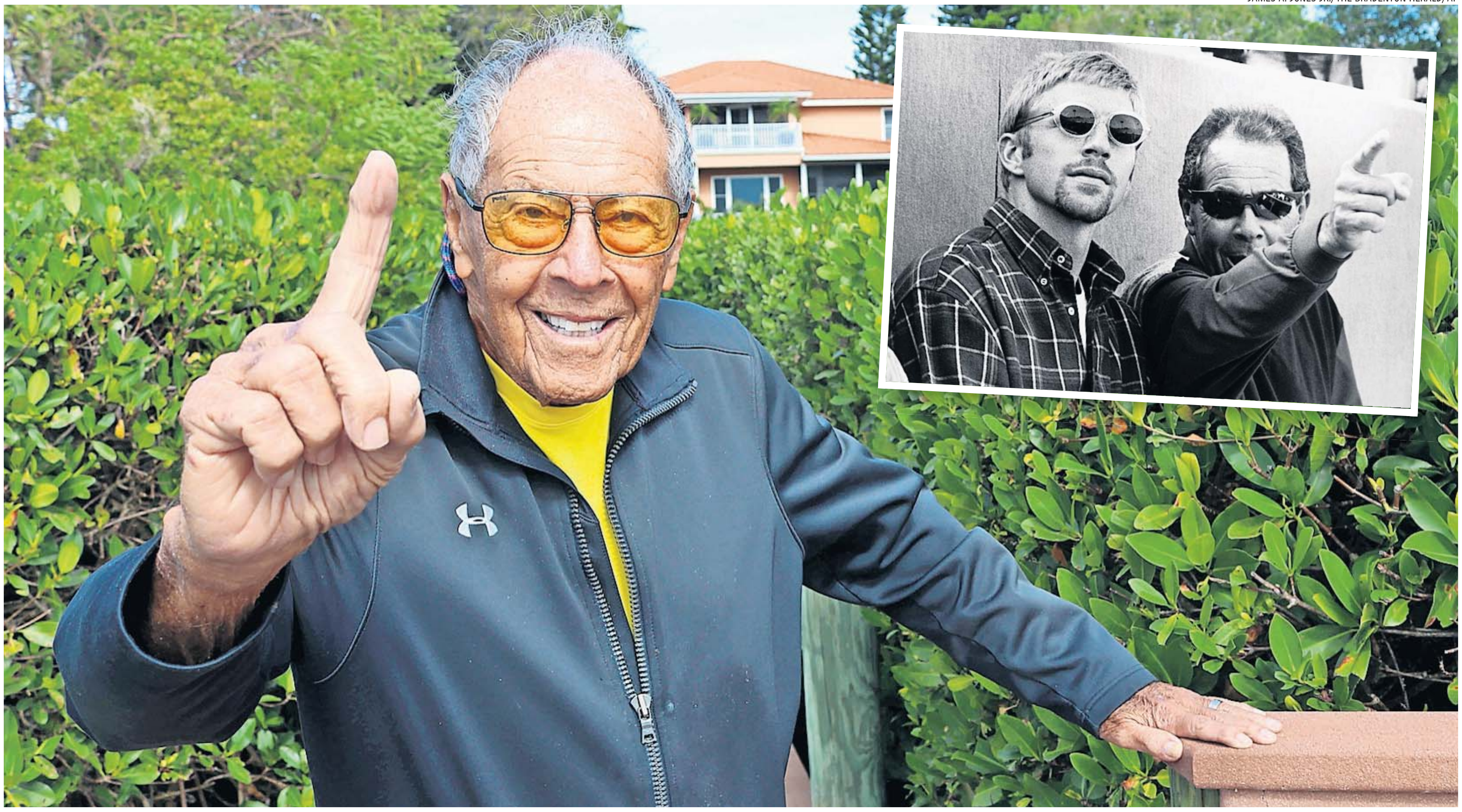
Sport

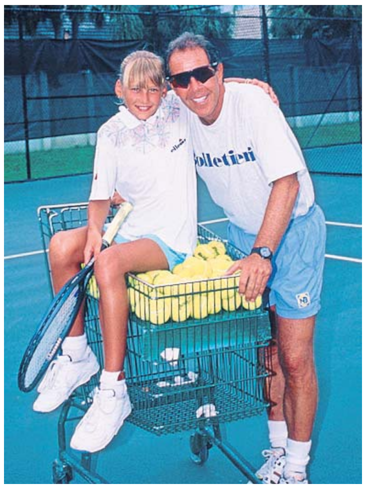
Bollettieri brought out best in people

Matthew Syed



JAMES A. JONES JR./THE BRADENTON HERALD/AP





Bollettieri set up his tennis academy in Florida in the 1980s and coached many of the game's stars, including Becker, inset, and a young Anna Kournikova, below

It is difficult to believe that Nick Bollettieri has died. I met him for the first time in 2007 at his eponymous tennis academy in Florida and, although he was 76, he had more energy, as I put in my copy at the time, than "your average Duracell bunny". He was bronzed, almost tangerine, in colour, with a wrinkled expression, dark sunglasses and the widest smile you've ever seen. And he had a personality so infectious, he could have single-handedly sparked a pandemic.

I remember walking towards one of the dozens of tennis courts on the site where he was coaching an aspiring French champion (back then, his rates were $900 for a one-hour session) and could hear his gravelly Italian-American voice ringing out from a hundred yards away.

"No, no. You can't do that," he cried. "Slice the ball and charge the net, don't just give up when the strings break." And then: "Oh yes, baby, that is more like it. Bee-oot-i-ful, absolutely bee-oot-i-ful."

Bollettieri was often written off as a marketing guy who lucked out in getting the likes of Andre Agassi and Maria Sharapova to his academy but this was a profound misreading of his greatness as a coach. He wasn't the most astute teacher of the technical side of the game but he was a keen student of human nature with an uncanny ability to make you want to do your best. During our lunch together, he articulated something that I have come to believe sits at the heart of great coaching.

"The trait that is extremely important, in sports or business, is to read people," he said, pointing a gnarled finger at my nose for extra emphasis. "And what you try to do is find a way to reach them. No two people in the whole world are the same and the trick is to find out a lot about that person, because that will tell you how to motivate them, how to find their triggers, how far you can push them."

I chatted to some of his young charges while at the academy and they all felt a personal connection with the "orange guy", as one called him. Whether they thought he was too strict, or not strict enough, too focused on physical conditioning, or not focused enough, they all agreed that he got to know them as individuals, as human beings, as people with their own hopes and aspirations. And what he did with acute insight was to connect these dreams to a target and a journey. As he put it to me: "We are all on a journey. But do you believe sufficiently to make it to the end?"

We continued our friendship, occasionally by email, more often when chatting at the All England Club where he would regularly come to watch Wimbledon. His self-belief was remarkable but never (to me) overbearing. Indeed, I warmed to his energy, the philosophy that oozed out of his being that life is not something to be wasted, but seized.

He woke at 4am every day and seemed gripped by the privilege of existence, of being alive, even as he moved into his ninth decade. "You only get one go," he said to me, "the only question is what you do with your time."

I smile looking back on that visit to Florida because after lunch with Bollettieri, I felt so motivated to get fit again, inspired by his example, that I asked one of the club pros to have a hit on one of the outdoor tennis courts. The heat was considerable, the humidity so intense that I almost fainted during the warm-up. But we kept going for an hour, moving, hitting, even playing a set at the end. And on the courts around me, stretching almost to the horizon, dozens of others were hitting too, enough piston force to power a small city.

And yet I don't think any of this could have happened without Bollettieri; without that human dynamo at the heart of the academy. He was the man who held it all together with pure force of personality, even after he sold the rights to the sport company IMG. I also don't think his champions would have made it as far as they did without him. His track record is, when you think about it, remarkable: not just Agassi and Sharapova, but also Boris Becker, Martina Hingis, Monica Seles and Serena and Venus Williams.

He was funny too. The Times obituary noted that he had a disarming way of dealing with questions on his personal life. If a woman happened to ask him: "Have you really had eight wives?" he would reply: "Why, are you looking to become the ninth?" I overheard this particular gem at least twice, but always with a shrug that acknowledged that his greatest weakness was optimism.

He thought every romantic relationship had limitless potential, a point that Cindi, his eighth wife, who was with him from 2004, made to me too.

And now he has gone. Tennis will not be the same without him, without that flamboyance of personality and infectiousness of enthusiasm. The artist HE Davey once said: "A strong life force can be seen in physical vitality, courage, competent judgment, self-mastery, sexual vigour, and the realisation of each person's unique talents and purpose in life. To maintain a powerful life force, forget yourself, forget about living and dying, and bring your full attention into this moment."

The words could have been written for Bollettieri.

Warner feared 'lynching' with appeal

Cricket

David Warner has withdrawn his appeal against a lifetime captaincy ban with Australia, accusing the review panel of wanting "a public lynching" in a long and bitter statement.

Warner was barred from holding any future leadership role with the national side for his role in the "Sandpapergate" ball-tampering scandal in Cape Town in 2018, as well as serving a year-long suspension, but had hoped to overturn the former sanction after a change to Cricket Australia's code of conduct.

He formally applied to have the ban rescinded in November, eager to show that at the age of 36 his "rehabilitation and transformation is profound". But the opening batsman has been riled by the approach of the independent body that has been dealing with his submission, arguing that it wants to conduct a damaging retrial of events in South Africa rather than consider the grounds of his appeal.

In a social media post of almost 800 words, he wrote: "To some extent the Review Panel want to conduct a public trial of me and what occurred during the Third Test at Newlands. They want to conduct a public spectacle to, in the Panel's words, have a 'cleansing'. I am not prepared for my family to be the washing machine for cricket's dirty laundry.

"It appears that the Panel has given no more than passing consideration to issues of player welfare and the interests of Australian cricket and is instead determined to conduct a public lynching. Regrettably, I have no practical alternative but to withdraw my application."

Cricket Australia responded last night by saying that it was disappointed that Warner had withdrawn his appeal.

"Our intention was to give David the opportunity to demonstrate why his lifetime leadership ban should be varied at an independent hearing and we amended our Code of Conduct accordingly," it said in a statement.

"We supported David's wish for these discussions to be heard behind closed doors and respect his decision to withdraw his application."

England wrap up series

Cricket Amy Jones and Sophia Dunkley made half-centuries and Lauren Bell took four wickets as England beat the West Indies by 142 runs in Antigua to go 2-0 up in their three-match ODI series.

England won the toss but their total of 260 all out looked to be below par. After a slow start, Dunkley punished the bowling of Aaliyah Alleyne with a series of boundaries to increase the run rate. She was bowled by Afy Fletcher for 57 but Jones took control as wickets fell at the other end to finish unbeaten on 70 off 63 balls.

West Indies, also beaten by 142 runs in the series opener, made a terrible start as Bell, 21, ripped through the top order. The hosts slumped to 49 for five inside ten overs and never recovered, eventually all out for 118.

Bangladesh hold off India

Cricket Mehidy Hasan Miraz hit his maiden one-day international century and took two key wickets as Bangladesh beat India by five runs to seal the three-match series.

Miraz made an unbeaten 100 and put on 148 for the seventh wicket with Mahmudullah Riyad to rescue Bangladesh from 69 for six as they made 271 for seven in Dhaka.

Rohit Sharma, the India captain, batted at No 9 with an injured thumb and hit an unbeaten 51 off 28 balls to give India hope but they fell short on 266 for nine.

"I'm feeling very happy. Winning the series as captain — it's a dream come true," said Liton Das, who led Bangladesh for the first time in an ODI series after the regular captain, Tamim Iqbal, missed out due to injury.

Warwick
Rob Wright

12.20 Play By The Rules **2.30** Lyrical Genius
12.50 Ballyhigh **3.00** Galia Des Liteaux
1.25 Northern Poet **3.30** Captain Teague
2.00 Tarahumara

Going: good to soft, good in places (8am inspection - frost) **Racing TV**

12.20 Maiden Hurdle (3-Y-O: £3,540: 2m) (14 runners)

1	**EDINBURGH ROCK** F49 M Harris 11-0	H Reed
2	**FADED FANTASY** F56 Christian Williams 11-0	J Tudor
3	5 **FORWARD FLIGHT** 37 (H) A King 11-0	T Bellamy
4	**GHASHAM** F52 I Williams 11-0	C Todd
5	3 **PLAY BY THE RULES** 18 (T) N Hawke 11-0	T Buckley (3)
6	44 **RECORD ART** 18 (H) F O'Brien 11-0	L Harrison (3)
7	**SAMUEL SPADE** F48 B Pauling 11-0	K Woods
8	**TROPICAL TALENT** F236 S Kirk 11-0	R McLernon
9	3 **VICTORY** 37 (V) A King 11-0	G Sheehan
10	**ARCLIGHT** F68 N Henderson 10-7	N De Boinville
11	F **ARDBRACCAN** 10 C Longsdon 10-7	Lilly Pinchin (3)
12	**CAPE CORNWALL ROSE** F38 (T) Sir M Todd 10-7	J M Davies
13	P **HIGHLAND LASS** 30 R J Price 10-7	Sean Houlihan
14	36 **TOUTE CHIC** 24 Jonjo O'Neill 10-7	M Kendrick

5-2 Arclight, 5-1 Victory, 7-1 Samuel Spade, 8-1 Play By The Rules, Ardbraccan, 10-1 Edinburgh Rock, Ghasham, 12-1 Record Art.

Rob Wright's choice: Play By The Rules showed promise when third at Exeter **Dangers** Samuel Spade, Victory

12.50 Maiden Hurdle (£3,540: 2m 5f) (17)

1	21-U **ALSO KNOWN AS** 34 Jonjo O'Neill 4-11-4	R McLernon
2	44 **BALLINOULART** 207 A Ralph 4-11-4	J J Burke
3	1- **BALLYHIGH** 418 N Henderson 5-11-4	N De Boinville
4	450P **BEANNAIGH DO** 76 (H) Sheila Lewis 5-11-4	R Dingle
5	05-0 **BEST MATE DAVE** 18 D J Jeffreys 5-11-4	T Bellamy
6	11-P **CHURCHILLS BOY** 23 N Gifford 5-11-4	J M Davies
7	0P4- **CLOUDY HILLS** 260 (T) P Webber 6-11-4	S Twiston-Davies
8	2P0-P **COMMODORE MILLER** 219 Mrs D O'Neill 5-11-4	G Sheehan
9	3 **HERCULES MORSE** 42 B Pauling 4-11-4	K Woods
10	P-40 **JIGGINSTOWN KING** 26 (T) O Signy 5-11-4	D Bass
11	2-0 **NOT LONG LEFT** 20 Christian Williams 5-11-4	J Tudor
12	62-2 **PEACE OF ROME** 30 (BF) N Henderson 4-11-4	D Jacob
13	004-5 **PRINCE DES MALVAUX** 20 K Davis 6-11-4	Mr D Kyne (7)
14	**RARE BEAR** Andrew Martin 4-11-4	J Martin (7)
15	600 **SABAARELLI** 43 A Carroll 5-10-11	L Edwards
16	0-0 **SISTER SAINT** 24 P Nicholls 5-10-11	L Williams
17	0/ **WHISKEY TIMES** 651 K Davis 9-10-11	K Lenihan (7)

7-4 Ballyhigh, 7-2 Peace Of Rome, 4-1 Hercules Morse, 7-1 Also Known As, 10-1 Sister Saint, 12-1 Ballinoulart, 16-1 Churchills Boy, 25-1 others.

Wright choice: Ballyhigh, who landed an Irish point-to-point, appeals **Dangers:** Churchills Boy, Commodore Miller

1.25 Handicap Hurdle (£3,812: 2m 5f) (10)

1	0-510 **ERNESTO** 26 (P,T) I Williams 7-12-0	Mr Daire McConville (7)
2	2412- **HAAS BOY** 244 (T) C Longsdon 5-12-0	J J Burke
3	P1P-0 **CROSSING THE BAR** 42 (T) N Mulholland 5-11-13	T Scudamore
4	1-P35 **CHARLIE'S GLANCE** 20 (T) Andrew Martin 6-11-12	J Martin (7)
5	0-12P **BETTY'S BANJO** 34 Jonjo O'Neill 5-11-11	K Brogan
6	632/1 **NORTHERN POET** 24 (D) N Gifford 7-11-9	J M Davies
7	6-431 **BADDESLEY** 24 (T,D) C Gordon 7-11-8	Mr Fred Gordon (7)
8	341-3 **BALLYCAMUS** 218 (BF) N Twiston-Davies 5-11-7	S Twiston-Davies
9	05-13 **WAVERING DOWN** 34 (P) J Scott 7-11-4	R Dingle
10	4430/ **DEER HUNTER** 699 Mrs D O'Neill 6-10-13	G Sheehan

5-2 Baddesley, 4-1 Haas Boy, 5-1 Northern Poet, 6-1 Ballycamus, 7-1 Wavering Down, 12-1 Charlie's Glance, Ernesto, 16-1 Betty's Banjo.

Wright choice: Northern Poet defied a lengthy break to win at Plumpton; unexposed **Dangers** Wavering Down, Haas Boy

2.00 Handicap Chase (£4,684: 2m) (5)

1	06-33 **COTTON END** 19 Sheila Lewis 8-12-0	Sean Houlihan
2	P3P-6 **CHANCEUX** 18 A Ralph 6-11-12	J J Burke
3	21- **TARAHUMARA** 250 E Lavelle 6-11-11	T Bellamy
4	4-243 **BLAZER'S MILL** 27 (P,T) S-J Davies 8-11-0	W T Kennedy
5	-444P **TREMWEDGE** 72 B Summers 6-10-2	C Ward (3)

8-11 Tarahumara, 4-1 Chanceux, 9-2 Cotton End, 12-1 Blazer's Mill, 14-1 Tremwedge.

Wright choice: Tarahumara looked a useful prospect over hurdles; can make a winning chasing debut **Danger** Chanceux

2.30 Handicap Chase (£3,812: 3m) (9)

1	53-44 **LYRICAL GENIUS** 23 (B) C Longsdon 5-12-0	Lilly Pinchin (3)
2	P1P-P **GUILLEMOT** 35 H Daly 6-12-0	S Twiston-Davies
3	436-1 **BALLAQUANE** 25 O Sherwood 7-11-11	J J Burke
4	1U1-1 **MANINTHESHADOWS** 38 (P) Jonjo O'Neill 7-11-9	R McLernon
5	43-P6 **PILOT SHOW** 24 (P) W Greatrex 5-11-5	T Scudamore
6	4-33P **VERSATILITY** 42 (T) Mrs D O'Neill 8-11-4	G Sheehan
7	2-136 **MOTOWN LAKE** 149 (P,T,D) Christian Williams 6-10-12	J Tudor
8	141P3 **HIGH COUNSEL** 67 (B,CD) G Hanmer 13-10-5	K Brogan
9	353/6 **PUPPET WARRIOR** 36 (P) Georgie Howell 10-10-3	Tabitha Worsley (3)

11-4 Ballaquane, 3-1 Manintheshadows, 5-1 High Counsel, 7-1 Guillemot, 8-1 Motown Lake, 10-1 Pilot Show, Lyrical Genius, 16-1 others.

Wright choice: Lyrical Genius set an overly strong pace when fourth at Hereford **Dangers** Manintheshadows, Pilot Show

3.00 Novices' Chase (£17,085: 2m 4f) (6)

1	133-1 **GALIA DES LITEAUX** 29 D Skelton 6-11-5	H Skelton
2	215-1 **EUREKA CREEK** 26 E Lavelle 6-11-0	T Bellamy
3	/342- **FARNE** 286 Noel Williams 8-11-0	G Sheehan
4	R-221 **KISSESFORKATIE** 34 J Scott 8-11-0	L Williams
5	1-201 **PANIC ATTACK** 19 (B,T,D) D Pipe 6-11-0	T Scudamore
6	604-1 **TWEED SKIRT** 31 (T,D) N Henderson 5-11-0	N De Boinville

5-4 Galia Des Liteaux, 4-1 Kissesforkatie, 5-1 Tweed Skirt, 7-1 Eureka Creek, Panic Attack, 14-1 Farne.

Wright choice: Galia Des Liteaux looked good on his debut over fences at Bangor-on-Dee **Danger** Panic Attack

3.30 Open NH Flat Race (£2,178: 2m) (10)

1	**ASTA LA PASTA** D Skelton 4-11-2	H Skelton
2	1- **CAPTAIN TEAGUE** 298 P Nicholls 4-11-2	L Williams
3	**DIAMOND TWIN** D Skelton 4-11-2	Bridget Andrews
4	**DIESEL LINE** (T) J Scott 4-11-2	R Dingle
5	4-2 **MUCH TOO DEAR** 215 L Horsfall 4-11-2	D Bass
6	0 **SAMAZUL** 40 B Pauling 4-11-2	K Woods
7	000 **STATION HILL** 9 T Gallagher 4-11-2	Mr J Reddington (7)
8	**AUTUMN BLAZE** S-J Davies 4-10-9	W T Kennedy
9	0- **CASSOWARY** 234 (P) Andrew Martin 4-10-9	S Twiston-Davies
10	**CRAZY MARY** I Williams 5-10-9	C Todd

5-4 Captain Teague, 7-2 Asta La Pasta, 5-1 Samazul, 8-1 Much Too Dear, 12-1 Crazy Mary, Diamond Twin, 16-1 Diesel Line, 50-1 Cassowary.

Wright choice: Captain Teague landed an Irish point-to-point; interesting **Dangers** Much Too Dear, Asta La Pasta

Chelmsford
Rob Wright

4.30 Engrave **7.00** Excel Power
5.00 Hill Station **7.30 Hit Mac** (nap)
5.30 Attrazione **8.00** Luna Queen
6.00 Beelzebub **8.30** Storm Catcher
6.30 Demi Pointe

Going: standard **Racing TV**
Draw: 5f-1m, low numbers best

4.30 Handicap (Div I£3,798: 1m 2f) (10)

1	(8) 52300 **ENGRAVE** 77 (P,CD) J Feilden 6-11-4	Mr S Walker
2	(5) 65054 **GRAFFITI** 45 G Brown 3-11-2	Miss Isabelle Ryder (5)
3	(4) -2626 **STORMINGIN** 250 (B,D) G L Moore 9-11-1	Miss Georgina Gibson (7)
4	(2) 6000 **FAITHLESS INSOMNIA** 12 P McEntee 3-11-0	Mr F Tett
5	(1) 33644 **RED EVELYN** 26 S Pearce 4-10-12	Mrs Stephanie Germany
6	(3) 42102 **VILLALOBOS** 9 (P,BF) R Hughes 3-10-10	Miss Taryn Langley (5)
7	(9) 60225 **QUOTELINE DIRECT** 52 (D) M Hammond 9-10-9	Miss Becky Smith
8	(7) 16030 **FELLOWSHIP** 70 (D) R Eddery 3-10-7	Mr G Eddery (3)
9	(10) 045 **REVOLUT** 134 N Twiston-Davies 4-10-7	Mr James Turner
10	(6) 55360 **TURN OF PHRASE** 19 J Berry 5-10-7	Mr F Yarham (5)

2-1 Villalobos, 9-2 Engrave, 7-1 Red Evelyn, Quoteline Direct, 8-1 Stormingin, 10-1 Fellowship, 12-1 Graffiti, 14-1 Revolut.

5.00 Handicap (Div II: £3,798: 1m 2f) (9)

1	(1) 31302 **MASTER GREY** 37 (P) B Millman 7-11-3	Mr P Millman
2	(9) 00002 **GEORGE RIDSDALE** 9 (BF,D) M & D Easterby 6-11-2	Miss S Brotherton
3	(2) 00-03 **HILL STATION** 8 G L Moore 3-11-1	Mr G Gorman (3)
4	(6) 464-0 **SISU** 223 H Main 4-10-13	Mr Henry Main (3)
5	(4) 2006U **PRINCE ACHILLE** 26 J O'Keeffe 3-10-11	Miss Jessica Barraclough (7)
6	(7) 00223 **BASCINET** 37 (P,BF) E J-Houghton 3-10-10	Miss Imogen Levick (7)
7	(3) 05334 **PERSIAN WOLF** 8 (B) P McEntee 4-10-8	Mr F Tett
8	(8) 24440 **MILLTOWN LILY** J16 M Hammond 4-10-7	Miss Becky Smith
9	(5) 000/0 **FITZY** J24 (P,T) P Butler 6-10-7	Miss M Bryant (5)

7-4 George Ridsdale, 3-1 Master Grey, 9-2 Hill Station, 5-1 Bascinet, 8-1 Persian Wolf, 25-1 Milltown Lily, Prince Achille, 33-1 Sisu, 100-1 Fitzy.

5.30 Nursery (2-Y-O: £3,996: 7f) (14)

1	(6) 653 **FOINIX** 139 G Kelleway 9-10	L Morris
2	(7) 500 **CAHORE RETREAT** 33 (V) P Evans 9-10	Rossa Ryan
3	(10) 00632 **ATTRAZIONE** 19 (T,BF) G Boughey 9-9	K Stott
4	(14) 0306 **LITTLE ROMAN** 19 M Loughnane 9-8	D Probert
5	(12) 0052 **OK PAL** 30 A Carroll 9-7	D Costello
6	(13) 000 **SECRETARY** 63 (B) H Spiller 9-6	C Howarth (5)
7	(9) 00135 **SKYBLUE EXPERT** 19 (B,T,D) Alice Haynes 9-5	K O'Neill
8	(11) 006 **AUROPHOBIA** 103 Miss A Murphy 9-4	G Wood
9	(2) 006 **PROFITAR RULES** 147 (P) T Dascombe 9-3	P-L Jamin (3)
10	(4) 0004 **HIYA HIYA** 48 (T,V) Joseph Parr 9-2	Josephine Gordon
11	(8) 6006 **MAM'ZELLE DUPONT** 30 (P) J J Quinn 8-13	J Hart
12	(1) 00050 **ABSOLUTE PEACH** 45 T Ward 8-13	R Hornby
13	(3) 00600 **SPIREITE BOY** 34 (P) M Appleby 8-13	H Turner
14	(5) 000 **SPEZIATO** 59 (P) K P De Foy 8-13	D Muscutt

5-2 Attrazione, 6-1 Skyblue Expert, 7-1 Ok Pal, 10-1 Secretary, 12-1 Absolute Peach, Hiya Hiya, Mam'zelle Dupont, 14-1 Speziato, Profitar Rules, Cahore Retreat.

6.00 Novice Stakes (Div I: 2-Y-O: £5,399: 6f) (10)

1	(9) **BAAHILL** S & E Crisford 9-7	R Coakley
2	(8) 53 **BEELZEBUB** 19 J Ferguson 9-7	D Muscutt
3	(7) 54 **ERTEBAT** 26 H Palmer 9-7	C Fallon
4	(10) 65323 **FIERCE** 47 G L Moore 9-7	T P Queally
5	(5) **FORNHAM ST MARTIN** S C Williams 9-7	J Hart
6	(4) 00 **OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS** 150 D Ivory 9-7	C Bennett
7	(2) **POPULAR DREAM** J Tate 9-7	Rossa Ryan
8	(1) 0 **ANNIE LAW** 19 J Fanshawe 9-2	R Clutterbuck
9	(3) 22242 **RADIO GOO GOO** 22 P Evans 9-2	K Stott
10	(6) 5 **SOFIA CAT** 123 R Beckett 9-2	R Hornby

3-1 Beelzebub, 9-2 Fierce, 5-1 Sofia Cat, 6-1 Ertebat, Radio Goo Goo, Baahill, 8-1 Popular Dream, 25-1 Fornham St Martin.

6.30 Novice Stakes (Div II: 2-Y-O: £5,399: 6f) (9)

1	(1) 0 **FADI** 20 R Hughes 9-7	F Marsh
2	(3) **FAYASEL** M Murphy & M Keady 9-7	D Keenan
3	(4) 0 **HITCHED** 26 D M Simcock 9-7	J P Spencer
4	(7) 00 **MIKKA** 26 D Shaw 9-7	C Hardie
5	(8) **TAWALLA** C Fellowes 9-7	K Stott
6	(5) 2 **THE X O** 198 J Ryan 9-7	A Kirby
7	(6) 354 **UMMING N' AHING** 19 W G M Turner 9-7	W Carson
8	(9) 6 **DEMI POINTE** 201 R Varian 9-2	J Mitchell
9	(2) **LADY BEECHFIELD** M & D Easterby 9-2	Joanna Mason

9-4 Demi Pointe, 3-1 Umming N' Ahing, 7-2 The X O, 4-1 Tawalla, 12-1 Hitched, 20-1 Fayasel, 25-1 Lady Beechfield, Fadi, 100-1 Mikka.

7.00 Handicap (£13,500: 1m) (5)

1	(1) 24426 **INTUITIVE** 234 (P,T,C,D) S & E Crisford 6-9-12	J Mitchell
2	(5) 02610 **EXCEL POWER** 9 (CD) A Watson 4-9-6	L Morris
3	(2) 30605 **AZANO** 19 (D) D O'Meara 6-9-3	D Probert
4	(3) 13-31 **DARWELL LION** 316 (D) J Butler 4-9-2	D Muscutt
5	(4) 03625 **BALDOMERO** 71 M Appleby 4-8-13	F Larson (3)

2-1 Darwell Lion, 3-1 Intuitive, 7-2 Excel Power, 5-1 Baldomero, 6-1 Azano.

7.30 Handicap (£3,996: 6f) (12)

1	(1) 46221 **ARAIFJAN** 7 (CD) M Herrington 5-10-0(5ex)	T Eaves
2	(10) 51151 **MARWARI** 101 (D) M & D Easterby 6-9-8	Joanna Mason
3	(9) 65634 **RAMDON ROCKS** 12 (P,T,D) Alice Haynes 3-9-8	K O'Neill
4	(3) 21000 **DARK DESIGN** 51 (CD) H Spiller 5-9-8	A Kirby
5	(12) 0-050 **THOMAS EQUINAS** 66 D Ivory 3-9-6	C Bennett
6	(11) 60151 **ALAFDHAL** 7 (CD) P McEntee 4-9-6(5ex)	K Stott
7	(5) 03004 **OLIVETTI** 12 R Stephens 3-9-4	T Fisher (5)
8	(6) 5252 **HIT MAC** 8 (H,BF) G Boughey 3-9-4	J Hart
9	(2) 36600 **WOODERS DREAM** 9 Jack Jones 3-9-4	D E Hogan
10	(4) 00-00 **MADAME MARMALADE** 78 (P) I Furtado 3-8-13	Elle-May Croot (7)
11	(7) 45530 **MAYBE TONIGHT** 65 A Carroll 3-8-12	D Probert
12	(8) 00-00 **PUSEY STREET** 205 J Gallagher 4-8-9	Billy Loughnane (7)

11-4 Araifjan, 4-1 Hit Mac, 9-2 Alafdhal, 5-1 Marwari, 8-1 Ramdon Rocks, 12-1 Dark Design, 16-1 Maybe Tonight, Olivetti.

8.00 Handicap (£3,996: 7f) (12)

1	(11) 6-030 **CAVALLUCCIO** 19 (H,BF) Alice Haynes 3-9-10	K O'Neill
2	(7) 13260 **HEALING POWER** 8 (CD) I Furtado 6-9-10	Elle-May Croot
3	(12) 32044 **SILKS PASS** 10 (B,T) Alice Haynes 3-9-9	T Hammer Hansen
4	(5) 04400 **FULL INTENTION** 22 (P,CD) S Pearce 8-9-9	D Probert
5	(10) 01205 **WELOOF** 26 (C) J Butler 8-9-7	Grace McEntee (3)
6	(4) 41003 **LUNA QUEEN** 19 (P) C Allen 3-9-6	K Stott
7	(2) 55060 **GOOD HUMOR** 155 (D) J Butler 5-9-5	D Keenan
8	(3) 52000 **PORT NOIR** 42 (T,D) R Stephens 5-9-5	T Fisher (5)
9	(8) 40000 **DEACS DELIGHT** 8 (B,T) P & O Cole 3-9-4	M Tabti (7)
10	(6) -0303 **CHAMPAGNE SUPANOVA** 110 (C) R Spencer 5-9-3	H Turner
11	(9) 43000 **HOLDENHURST** 94 (V,D) W G M Turner 7-9-3	L Morris
12	(1) 0000- **JAZZ MUSIC** 531 D Shaw 5-8-4	C Hardie

3-1 Cavalluccio, 4-1 Luna Queen, 9-2 Silks Pass, 8-1 Champagne Supanova, 10-1 Healing Power, Good Humor, 12-1 Weloof, 14-1 Full Intention.

8.30 Handicap (£5,076: 1m 2f) (8)

1	(5) 0340 **VIDHAATA** 31 (P) M Botti 3-9-13	D Muscutt
2	(6) 200-5 **STORM CATCHER** 19 S Pearce 4-9-12	D Probert
3	(8) 00030 **CHATEAU D'IF** 29 (P,T,D) Miss A Murphy 4-9-12	S Cherchi
4	(4) 02446 **RHUBARB BIKINI** J14 (V,C) M Attwater 5-9-10	K O'Neill
5	(1) 531 **FAR HORIZON** 19 M Scudamore 4-9-10	A Keeley (5)
6	(7) 25264 **THEY DON'T KNOW** 91 (B,T) Darryll Holland 3-9-9	K Stott
7	(2) 0-531 **COPPERKNOB** 170 (D) G L Moore 3-9-7	T P Queally
8	(3) 62104 **THE BAY WARRIOR** 128 (P,CD) M Usher 4-9-2	R Clutterbuck

9-4 Copperknob, 100-30 Far Horizon, 6-1 Storm Catcher, 7-1 They Don't Know, 8-1 The Bay Warrior, 10-1 Vidhaata, 12-1 Chateau D'if, Rhubarb Bikini.

Newcastle
Rob Wright

12.12 Blue Shark **2.22** Since Day One
12.42 Hashtag Lord **2.52 Telhimlisten** (nb)
1.17 Bretney **3.22** Swedish Icon
1.52 Imperial Merlin

Going: good to soft-soft in places (prec inspection 7.30am) **Sky Sports Racing**

12.12 Handicap Hurdle (£4,357: 2m 4f) (18)

1	4054- **ZWICKY** 277 P Kirby 5-12-0	Jay Kozaczek (8)
2	-1004 **HEROS DE MOUTIERS** 26 D McCain 5-12-0	T Gillard (3)
3	66-00 **WANDERING WEST** 22 M Walford 4-11-9	T Midgley
4	P0-5P **KINGS JUSTICE** 56 S Allwood 4-11-9	Benjamin Abbott (10)
5	-3306 **COUP DE GOLD** 28 D Thompson 6-11-8	P J Kavanagh
6	5-3U4 **AAZZA** 21 R Dobbin 6-11-6	D Johnston (10)
7	334-0 **ULTRA VIOLET** 47 (P) N Alexander 4-11-6	B Lynn (3)
8	65524 **LONE STAR** 21 (T,BF) P Kirby 5-11-1	J Williamson
9	00-5P **DAKOTA BEAT** 27 (P,T,D) J Norton 7-11-1	C Rabbitt (3)
10	060-0 **EUCHAN FALLS** 29 R M Smith 5-10-13	W Shanahan (3)
11	54001 **BLUE SHARK** 32 (D) Jonjo O'Neill 5-10-10	J Brace (6)
12	-6P40 **EX S'ELANCE** 17 (P,C) V Thompson 8-10-8	Daire Davis (7)
13	UP-60 **BIG ARTHUR** 28 (H) H Graham & G Rutherford 5-10-3	E Austin
14	04440 **THAT'S YOUR LOTTIE** 17 (H,T) K Scott 7-10-3	Emma Smith-Chaston
15	-2540 **BRICKADANK** 34 M Hammond 6-10-2	J Thompson (10)
16	60064 **HALCYON DREAMS** 14 (T) K Scott 7-10-2	L Dobb (5)
17	U050/ **ROYAL FLUSH** 795 (W) S Waugh 11-10-2	T Willmott
18	00-P4 **BALLYFARSOON** 9 (D) P Winks 11-10-2	P W Wadge (5)

7-2 Blue Shark, 6-1 Heros De Moutiers, Lone Star, 8-1 Aazza, Brickadank, 10-1 Ex S'elance, That's Your Lottie, 12-1 Coup De Gold.

12.42 Maiden Hurdle (£4,901: 2m) (13)

1	20- **A SHINING MOON** F49 P Midgley 4-11-4	T Midgley (5)
2	3-14 **BALLABAWN** 29 (BF) D McCain 4-11-4	B Hughes
3	56-00 **BLAME THE FARRIER** 143 (H) D Thompson 5-11-4	C Bewley
4	64-30 **COMMANDER OF TEN** 23 M Scudamore 5-11-4	Doubtful
5	33- **CREBILLY** 277 Jonjo O'Neill 5-11-4	Jonjo O'Neill Jr
6	5-62 **HASHTAG LORD** 28 (P) J Ewart 5-11-4	D McMenamin
7	434- **SAN ROCH** 527 T Easterby 5-11-4	J Hamilton
8	66-P **TARQUIN STARDUST** 45 (H) Ewan Whillans 6-11-4	H Brooke
9	-4506 **TOMMY'S FORTUNE** 16 T Collier 4-11-4	T Dowson
10	213-6 **TOP CLOUD** 22 C Grant 5-11-4	Sean Quinlan
11	0P **PEPPERMILL** 22 (T) M Barnes 5-10-11	C O'Farrell
12	305-0 **SHE'S A STEAL** 16 R Dobbin 5-10-11	Craig Nichol
13	56- **TURBULENT POWER** F87 B Rothwell 4-10-11	A Anderson (5)

11-8 Crebilly, 5-2 Ballabawn, 3-1 Hashtag Lord, 12-1 San Roch, 16-1 Top Cloud, 20-1 A Shining Moon, 25-1 She's A Steal, 50-1 Turbulent Power.

1.17 Handicap Chase (£8,169: 2m 7f) (7)

1	431-4 **MONBEG GENIUS** 33 (T) Jonjo O'Neill 6-12-2	Jonjo O'Neill Jr
2	2F-34 **STYLISH MOMENT** 36 (T) L Russell 9-12-2	D R Fox
3	24511 **LADRONNE** 20 (T,CD) T Collier 8-11-12	Sean Quinlan
4	1/2-F **INDIAN BRAVE** 40 (T) N Mulholland 11-11-11	R T Dunne
5	34-UU **HALF TRACK** 14 N Alexander 6-11-7	D McMenamin
6	P2-6F **WHO'S IN THE BOX** 20 (P) N Kent 8-10-10	C Hammond
7	22-41 **BRETNEY** 30 (P) H Daly 7-10-7	R Patrick

11-4 Ladronne, 7-2 Bretney, Monbeg Genius, 6-1 Stylish Moment, 8-1 Half Track, 10-1 Who's In The Box, Indian Brave.

1.52 Novices' Hurdle (£4,901: 2m 6f) (5)

1	21-1 **IMPERIAL MERLIN** 20 J J Quinn 5-11-7	B Garritty
2	263-1 **SUPREME GIFT** 26 H Daly 5-11-7	R Patrick
3	536 **BRIAN'S JET** 12 B Ellison 4-11-0	N Moscrop
4	50 **I'M DOUGAL ROCKS** 172 M Hammond 5-11-0	C O'Farrell
5	1-103 **MACAVITY** 26 J O'Keeffe 4-11-0	Craig Nichol

11-10 Imperial Merlin, 7-4 Supreme Gift, 11-2 Macavity, 16-1 I'm Dougal Rocks, 20-1 Brian's Jet.

2.22 Handicap Chase (£11,618: 2m) (4)

1	214-1 **SINCE DAY ONE** 45 (D) D McCain 6-11-10	B Hughes
2	336/2 **MIAH GRACE** 29 J O'Keeffe 7-11-8	H Brooke
3	12234 **NERO ROCK** 26 (P) J Candlish 7-11-6	Sean Quinlan
4	/34-6 **DAKOTA MOIRETTE** 15 A Crook 9-10-5	J Kington

4-5 Since Day One, 2-1 Miah Grace, 5-1 Nero Rock, 33-1 Dakota Moirette.

2.52 Handicap Hurdle (£4,357: 2m) (17)

1	23133 **COPPER FOX** 132 (D) D McCain 5-12-1	B Hughes
2	5-632 **BOLLINGERANDKRUG** 47 (T,BF,D) L Russell 7-12-0	D R Fox
3	/55-P **BOTTLE HILL** 27 (BF) W Coltherd 6-11-11	S Coltherd
4	52-0 **EDGAR ALLAN POE** 20 Sue Smith 8-11-10	T Willmott (3)
5	3/4 **LICIT** 21 T Easterby 5-11-10	Mr W Easterby (5)
6	-2P4P **CHARLIE'S ROCKSTAR** 34 (H,T) Mrs A C Hamilton 5-11-6	J Hamilton
7	266P- **RUSSIAN VIRTUE** F51 R Menzies 5-11-2	N Moscrop
8	2F0F2 **SIX ONE NINE** 36 C Grant 7-11-1	D McMenamin
9	-F400 **CORNELL** 13 J J Davies 4-11-1	C Bewley
10	5P-4 **BULLS AYE** 106 I Jardine 4-11-0	C O'Farrell
11	1114U **MISTY MANI** 16 (D) P Niven 7-11-0	T Midgley (5)
12	-0450 **ARCHIVE** 64 (D) Suzzanne France 12-10-11	Emma Smith-Chaston (3)
13	0/6-2 **TELHIMLISTEN** 36 J Candlish 6-10-10	Sean Quinlan
14	0/40P **THE GREAT GEORGIE** 22 Mrs J Stephen 7-10-8	Craig Nichol
15	40534 **MY MACHO MAN** 21 (P,T) K Scott 5-10-7	B Lynn (3)
16	255-U **ZARA'S UNIVERSE** 16 A Crook 6-10-6	C Rabbitt (7)
17	000P **MORE TO FOLLOW** 21 (H) D Bourke 5-10-6	R Chapman

3-1 Bollingerandkrug, 7-1 Copper Fox, 8-1 Bottle Hill, 10-1 Telhimlisten, Bulls Aye, Misty Mani, Licit, 12-1 Six One Nine, My Macho Man, Russian Virtue.

3.22 Open NH Flat Race (£2,614: 2m) (15)

1	2-0 **ARTIC ROW** 45 (W) N Alexander 5-11-2	H Brooke
2	4 **ASK MY HEATHER** 16 S Corbett 4-11-2	D Hurst (7)
3	**BALLIN BAY** (H) Miss P Robson 4-11-2	B Hughes
4	**BETTER BE DEFINITE** H Graham & G Rutherford 4-11-2	R Mania
5	**BOB DELANEY** P Winks 6-11-2	Alison Johnson (7)
6	2F3- **BOY DE LA VIS** 231 J Moffatt 4-11-2	Charlotte Jones (3)
7	2 **HAD TO BE HUGO** 221 R Menzies 5-11-2	C O'Farrell
8	**HUBBEL BUBBEL** P Kirby 4-11-2	T Dowson
9	**IMPATIENT** Jonjo O'Neill 4-11-2	Jonjo O'Neill Jr
10	4P-FF **RAFFLES WONDER** 207 R Menzies 5-11-2	A Anderson (5)
11	**SAMILLIER** M Walford 4-11-2	J Hamilton
12	**SWEDISH ICON** Ruth Jefferson 4-11-2	C Bewley
13	3 **WEE BAZ** 33 D Bourke 4-11-2	R Chapman
14	**GLEN CLOVIS** Mrs J Stephen 4-10-9	P J Kavanagh (5)
15	**ON YER SCHNAPPS** M Barnes 5-10-9	S Mulqueen

3-1 Impatient, 5-1 Wee Baz, 6-1 Ballin Bay, Boy De La Vis, 7-1 Had To Be Hugo, 12-1 Swedish Icon, 14-1 Better Be Definite, 16-1 others.

Taunton
Rob Wright

12.28 Wajaaha **2.38** Ilanz
1.00 Vazir **3.08** Airtothethrone
1.35 Brentford Hope **3.40** Braganza Bay
2.08 Voice Of Calm

Going: good **Racing TV**

12.28 Selling Hurdle (£3,376: 2m 104yd) (7)

1	1-0P2 **CITY DERBY** 24 (P,T,D) F O'Brien 6-11-6	Jack Hogan (5)
2	212F3 **KANUKANKAN** 39 (BF) F Brennan 7-11-6	P Armson (3)
3	123/1 **WAJAAHA** F8 (P,D) C Byrnes (Ire) 7-11-6	P Byrnes (5)
4	5P6-P **POSEIDON** F13 (P,D) G Elliott (Ire) 8-11-0	S Bowen
5	32302 **TRUE ROMANCE** 28 (P,T,BF,D) N Mulholland 8-11-0	T Doggrell (7)
6	-4426 **VANDERBILT** 28 (B) M Gillard 8-11-0	F Gillard (3)
7	02203 **YAAZAAIN** 28 N Hawke 6-11-0	T Cannon

Evens Wajaaha, 5-2 Poseidon, 6-1 True Romance, 8-1 City Derby, 16-1 Kanukankan, 33-1 Yaazaain, 50-1 Vanderbilt.

1.00 Handicap Hurdle (£4,302: 2m 104yd) (14)

1	43P-6 **VAZIR** 19 (P) A King 4-12-0	T Cannon
2	5P20/ **MR SOCIABLE** 594 C Down 7-11-12	B Carver
3	6640- **PER VINO VERITAS** 238 Joe Tizzard 7-11-8	B J Powell
4	00-54 **ALGHAZAAL** 16 (T) C Longsdon 5-11-2	Paul O'Brien
5	P00-6 **FORCE DE FRAP** 27 (P,T) Mrs E Bishop 7-10-12	H Beswick (3)
6	66P22 **BALIYAD** 8 (T) M Sheppard 7-10-9	F Lambert (7)
7	1-500 **YA KNOW YASEFF** 38 D Pipe 5-10-9	P Armson (3)
8	-050P **JACK THE FARMER** 26 (P) B Lund 6-10-6	T Eyston (7)
9	0-060 **JUST DEEGEETEEBEE** 17 (T) F O'Brien 6-10-5	C Brace
10	0P06- **MODREENEY** 269 (W,T,D) Christian Williams 5-10-4	E Collier
11	655P- **ALFA DAWN** 260 P Bowen 6-10-3	S Bowen
12	55-00 **BELLS OF RUTLAND** 46 T Vaughan 5-10-2	A Johns
13	0000- **CHRISTOPHER CLIVE** 273 Claire Harris 4-10-2	D Prichard (5)
14	00P-0 **ANGUS DE BULL** 30 R Potter 6-10-2	B Poste

11-4 Baliyad, 7-2 Vazir, 4-1 Per Vino Veritas, 8-1 Alghazaal, 10-1 Ya Know Yaseff, 12-1 Just Deegeeteebee, 16-1 Mr Sociable, Modreeney.

1.35 Novices' Hurdle (£4,901: 2m 104yd) (14)

1	0-1 **RUBAUD** 28 (CD) P Nicholls 4-11-7	H Cobden
2	2 **BRENTFORD HOPE** 17 R Hughes 5-11-0	B J Powell
3	0 **CLAY** 20 N King 4-11-0	J Quinlan
4	-4406 **GUN RUNNER CASH** 13 (H,D) B Lund 5-11-0	T Eyston (7)
5	6FU-0 **INSTANT GAMBLER** 14 Alexandra Dunn 6-11-0	A Wedge
6	400-3 **INVINCIBLE DE MEE** 129 T Vaughan 4-11-0	A Johns
7	0-06 **LET IT SHINE** 19 M Scudamore 4-11-0	B Poste
8	0 **LITTLE PI** 44 M Sheppard 4-11-0	S Sheppard
9	00- **RUSSIES DREAM** 369 C Down 6-11-0	B Carver
10	4-30 **SAILED AWAY** 22 (H,T) Alexandra Dunn 4-11-0	P Armson (3)
11	6 **SASSIFIED** 28 P Hobbs 4-11-0	T J O'Brien
12	0/0 **THE RAIN KING** 20 (T) Alexandra Dunn 5-11-0	F Gillard (3)
13	5-0 **NOUS ESPERONS** 24 P Hobbs 4-10-7	B R Jones
14	-060P **SHEE'S A STELLA** 20 D Hamer 4-10-7	A Thorne (5)

4-7 Rubaud, 2-1 Brentford Hope, 12-1 Sassified, 14-1 Invincible De Mee, 33-1 Little Pi, Let It Shine, 50-1 Russies Dream, Clay, Gun Runner Cash.

2.08 Handicap Chase (£7,624: 2m 2f) (6)

1	26-13 **ZACONY REBEL** 26 (D) T Lawes 7-12-0	T Cannon
2	1112P **KAUTO THE KING** 42 (T) Joe Tizzard 8-12-0	B J Powell
3	32P-P **QUOI DE NEUF** 14 (P,T,CD) E Williams 8-11-12	A Wedge
4	25-2P **VOICE OF CALM** 29 (T) E Lavelle 6-11-9	J A Anderson (7)
5	11113 **HUELGOAT** 14 (T,BF) P Nicholls 5-11-5	H Cobden
6	250-1 **MIDNIGHT MIDGE** 28 (CD) P Hobbs 8-11-0	B R Jones

9-4 Midnight Midge, 7-2 Huelgoat, 4-1 Zacony Rebel, 6-1 Voice Of Calm, Quoi De Neuf, 8-1 Kauto The King.

2.38 Handicap Hurdle (£6,753: 2m 3f) (4)

1	13-21 **HYLAND** 193 N Henderson 5-12-0	J Bowen
2	/443- **ON TO VICTORY** F33 A King 8-11-9	T Cannon
3	556-0 **MAGISTRATO** 40 (T) P Nicholls 4-11-8	H Cobden
4	12431 **ILANZ** 7 (H) M Harris 4-10-8	M Bastyan

11-8 Ilanz, 7-4 Hyland, 11-2 On To Victory, 6-1 Magistrato.

3.08 Handicap Chase (£4,629: 2m 7f) (11)

1	-3214 **DAN'S CHOSEN** 24 P Hobbs 7-12-0	T J O'Brien
2	3-FP0 **BARROWMOUNT** 20 Seamus Mullins 6-11-12	M G Nolan
3	32-43 **AIRTOTHETHRONE** 17 T Vaughan 6-11-11	A Johns
4	06-04 **GO FOX** 113 N King 7-11-10	J Quinlan
5	-6135 **HO QUE OUI** 38 Alexandra Dunn 5-11-4	F Gillard (3)
6	44-3F **LAZY SUNDAY** 14 (T,BF) R Mitford-Slade 8-11-2	B Carver
7	235-P **LAYERTHORPE** 17 (P) D Hamer 10-10-11	B R Jones
8	45-4P **SHIROCCO'S DELIGHT** 50 Miss A N-Smith 5-10-7	T Cannon
9	-216P **TOAD OF TOAD HALL** 17 Alexandra Dunn 6-10-6	P Armson
10	035F0 **OLD PAGE** 12 A Sadik 5-10-2	J Best
11	6/64- **BOTUS FLEMING** 333 (P,T) Miss J Du Plessis 7-10-2	H Kimber

9-4 Airtothethrone, 3-1 Dan's Chosen, 4-1 Lazy Sunday, 7-1 Ho Que Oui, 12-1 Toad Of Toad Hall, 16-1 Go Fox, 20-1 Shirocco's Delight, Layerthorpe.

3.40 Handicap Hurdle (£4,302: 3m) (13)

1	31323 **CASPERS COURT** 24 (P) K Woollacott 8-12-0	Paul O'Brien
2	1-346 **KILLYBEGS JUNIOR** 21 (B) F O'Brien 6-11-12	Jack Hogan (5)
3	-5P6P **WEARAPINKRIBBON** 24 (P) Mrs H Nelmes 6-11-11	B J Powell
4	-PP01 **BRAGANZA BAY** 23 (P) H Daly 5-11-8	T J O'Brien
5	10PP/ **ARGUS** 688 (T) Alexandra Dunn 10-11-3	A Wedge
6	4-P60 **HARDE FASHION** 14 (P) Daniel Bourne 6-11-2	T Durrell (5)
7	6333F **ALRAMZ** 21 Mrs S Gardner 6-11-0	Lucy Gardner
8	20-P4 **LORD BILL** 28 G Harris 5-10-13	C Ring (3)
9	P2434 **DANNYSTORY** 28 Harriet Brown 5-10-13	B Godfrey (3)
10	50P **OCTAVIUS SABINI** 13 (B) Joe Ponting 5-10-3	D Burton (5)
11	P3-F4 **SURE LISTEN** 21 Mrs F M Shaw 5-10-3	J Best
12	3PP-0 **GALACTIC POWER** 30 (V) Harriet Dickin 12-10-2	B Poste
13	2-34P **MENAPIAN** 54 (B) Mrs H Nelmes 11-10-2	Charlie Price (3)

5-6 Braganza Bay, 7-2 Caspers Court, 6-1 Killybegs Junior, 12-1 Alramz, 20-1 Sure Listen, Dannystory, Galactic Power, 25-1 Lord Bill.

Course specialists

Chelmsford: Trainers J J Quinn, 20 winners from 78 runners, 25.6%; R Beckett, 26 from 107, 24.3%. **Jockeys** K Stott, 17 winners from 54 rides, 31.5%; F Marsh, 10 from 56, 17.9%.

Newcastle: Trainers N Kent, 3 from 5, 60%; M Scudamore, 8 from 31, 25.8%. **Jockeys** R Patrick, 3 from 8, 37.5%; P J Kavanagh, 5 from 18, 27.8%.

Taunton: Trainers P Nicholls, 45 from 154, 29.2%; P Hobbs, 27 from 128, 21.1%. **Jockeys** H Cobden, 34 from 119, 28.6%; S Sheppard, 5 from 24, 20.8%.

Warwick: Trainers G Hanmer, 8 from 23, 34.8%; N Henderson, 37 from 135, 27.4%. **Jockeys** H Skelton, 54 from 224, 24.1%; N de Boinville, 20 from 89, 22.5%.

Blinkered first time: Chelmsford 5.30 Skyblue Expert. 5.30 Secretary. **Taunton** 3.40 Octavius Sabini. 3.40 Menapian. 3.40 Killybegs Junior.

Yesterday's racing results

Kempton Park
Going: standard/slow

4.55 (7f) 1, **Intricate Pillar** (Hector Crouch, 10-1); 2, Abbey's Dream (2-1 fav); 3, Evening Story (11-2). 13 ran. NR: Holy Fire. Nk, nk. T Ward.

5.30 (7f) 1, **Perdika** (Kevin Stott, 7-4 fav); 2, Master Of Chant (8-1); 3, Hey Lyla (5-1). 7 ran. ½l, ½l. G Boughey.

6.00 (1m) 1, **Tyndrum Gold** (J Mitchell, 4-6 fav); 2, Garrick Painter (9-1); 3, Strategia (13-2). 9 ran. NR: Royal Cape, Stenton Glider. 2¾l, ½l. R Varian.

6.30 (1m) 1, **Dionysian** (Hector Crouch, 8-11 fav); 2, Anisette (11-2); 3†, City Of York (14-1). 3†, Congresbury (3-1). 11 ran. 2l, nk. S C Williams.

7.00 (1m) 1, **Al Agaila** (James Doyle, 7-5 fav); 2, Estidama (11-4); 3, Weydaad (80-1). 9 ran. 4l, 1¼l. S & E Crisford.

7.30 (1m) 1, **Albion Princess** (W Buick, 6-4 fav); 2, Colombidea (5-1); 3, Dungar Glory (6-1). 5 ran. Nk, 2¾l. R Charlton.

8.00 (1m 7f 218yd) 1, **Pons Aelius** (Joanna Mason, 17-2); 2, Rainbow Dreamer (10-1); 3, Bandinelli (11-2). 13 ran. NR: Duty Of Care. 1¼l, sh hd. C & M Johnston.

8.30 (1m 2f 219yd) 1, **Barenboim** (J Watson, 15-8 jt-fav); 2, Junkanoo (15-8 jt-fav); 3, Precision Storm (11-1). 5 ran. NR: He's A Latchico. 2¼l, 1¾l. D O'Meara. **Jackpot: £774.10.**

Placepot: £5.60. **Quadpot: £2.40.**

Leicester
Going: soft (good to soft in places)

12.10 (1m 7f 113yd hdle) 1, **Aggagio** (Caoilin Quinn, 2-1 jt-fav); 2, Blended Stealth (2-1 jt-fav); 3, Lough Carra (3-1). 6 ran. 1l, 21l. G L Moore.

12.40 (2m 6f 151yd ch) 1, **The Boat** (Adam Wedge, 9-4 fav); 2, Boagrius (9-2); 3, Dreamsundermyfeet (5-1). 8 ran. 7½l, 8½l. Evan Williams.

1.15 (2m 4f 110yd hdle) 1, **Grozni** (P Byrnes, 4-1); 2, Not A Light (9-2); 3, Scamallach Liath (7-2 Co fav). 11 ran. Sh hd, 3l. C Byrnes.

1.50 (1m 7f 201yd ch) 1, **Great Heart'Jac** (P J Brennan, 7-2); 2, Miladygrace (11-10 fav); 3, Gaelic Thunder (10-1). 4 ran. 1¼l, 12l. F O'Brien.

2.25 (1m 7f 113yd hdle) 1, **Twinjets** (H Cobden, 2-5 fav); 2, Gardener (15-2); 3, Cuthbert Dibble (5-1). 11 ran. NR: Hidden Beauty, Opposite Ends. 1¼, ¾l. M F Harris.

3.00 (2m 4f 25yd ch) 1, **Bold Endeavour** (N de Boinville, 5-4 fav); 2, Ashington (4-1); 3, Golden Taipan (16-1). 7 ran. 10l, hd. N J Henderson.

3.35 (2m 4f 110yd hdle) 1, **Yellowstone Park** (Kielan Woods, 6-1); 2, Spanish Present (2-1 fav); 3, Cawthorne Lad (6-1). 7 ran. NR: Thirtyfourstitches. 1l, nk. A M Hales.

Placepot: £24.00. **Quadpot: £9.70.**

Lingfield Park
Going: standard

11.20 (1m 1yd) 1, **Blue Collar Lad** (W Carson, 12-1); 2, Ruith Le Tu (9-1); 3, Mcqueen (100-30). 11 ran. NR: Dashing To You. Nk, ns. R Brisland.

11.50 (7f 1yd) 1, **Starshiba** (Daniel Muscutt, 7-1); 2, Granary Queen (5-2 fav); 3, Broxi (15-2). 11 ran. ½l, hd. D O'Meara.

12.20 (6f 1yd) 1, **Huberts Dream** (R Kingscote, 1-3 fav); 2, South Dakota Sioux (6-1); 3, Juryman (16-1). 7 ran. NR: Canadian Fire, Doctor Mozart, Sweet Idea. 5l, ½l. S C Williams.

12.50 (6f 1yd) 1, **Pocket The Packet** (J Crowley, Evens fav); 2, Profitable Dawn (14-1); 3, Diamond Dreamer (4-1). 10 ran. 1¼l, 1½l. G Boughey.

1.25 (6f 1yd) 1, **Tyger Bay** (Tyler Heard, 15-2); 2, Total Commitment (5-2); 3, High Velocity (10-1). 9 ran. Hd, ½l. C Allen.

2.00 (1m 4f) 1, **Tudor** (J F Egan, 5-6 fav); 2, Marion's Boy (100-30); 3, Zhang Fei (5-1). 8 ran. Nk, ¾l. K P De Foy.

2.35 (1m 2f) 1, **Crystal Delight** (J Crowley, 9-4); 2, Marley Head (22-1); 3, Into The Spotlight (9-2). 6 ran. NR: Cotopaxi Moon. 7½l, 2l. W Jarvis.

3.10 (1m 2f) 1, **Rikona** (Paddy Bradley, 9-1); 2, Motataabeq (3-1 fav); 3, Hot Day (12-1). 13 ran. NR: Bakersboy. 1½l, 1¼l. K P De Foy.

Placepot: £13.50. **Quadpot: £2.30.**

Results

Football

FA Cup: second round-replay

Stockport (1) 3 **Charlton** (1) 1
Collar 25, 73, 81 — Wright 7 (og)
6,242
(Stockport at home to Walsall on Jan 8)

Vanarama North Kidderminster 0 Chester 2.

Pitching In Southern League: Premier division: South Harrow Wanderers 1 Hartley Wintney 0; Truro City 1 Beaconsfield Town 1; Tiverton Town 2 North Leigh 1.

Pitching In Isthmian League: Premier division Bognor Regis Town 2 Cray Wanderers 2; Kingstonian 1 Lewes 3.

Women's Champions League: Group C Arsenal 1 Juventus 0.

Women's League Cup: Group A Manchester Utd 4 Everton 2; Sheffield Utd 1 Aston Villa 2. **Group B** Liverpool 0 Manchester City 2.

Cricket

Second ODI: Bangladesh v India

Mirpur (Bangladesh won toss): Bangladesh beat India by five runs

Bangladesh		(balls)
Anamul Haque lbw b Siraj	11	(9)
*Litton Das b Siraj	7	(23)
Najmul Hossain Shanto b Malik	21	(35)
Shakib Al Hasan c Dhawan b Sundar	8	(20)
†Mushfiqur Rahim c Dhawan b Sundar	12	(24)
M Mahmudullah c Rahul b Malik	77	(96)
Afif Hossain b Sundar	0	(1)
Mehidy Hasan Miraz not out	100	(83)
Nasum Ahmed not out	18	(11)
Extras (b 1, lb 3, w 11, nb 2)	17	
Total (7 wkts, 50 overs)	**271**	

Ebadot Hossain and Mustafizur Rahman did not bat.

Fall of wickets 1-11, 2-39, 3-52, 4-66, 5-69, 6-69, 7-217.

Bowling Chahar 3-0-12-0; Siraj 10-0-73-2; Thakur 10-1-47-0; Malik 10-2-58-2; Sundar 10-0-37-3; Patel 7-0-40-0.

India		(balls)
V Kohli b E Hossain	5	(6)
S Dhawan c Miraz b Rahman	8	(10)
S S Iyer c A Hossain b Miraz	82	(102)
W Sundar c Das b Al Hasan	11	(19)
†K L Rahul lbw b Miraz	14	(28)
A R Patel c Al Hasan b E Hossain	56	(56)
S N Thakur st Rahim b Al Hasan	7	(23)
D L Chahar c Shanto b E Hossain	11	(18)
*R G Sharma not out	51	(28)
Mohammed Siraj b Mahmudullah	2	(12)
U Malik not out	0	(0)
Extras (b 4, lb 2, w 11, nb 2)	19	
Total (9 wkts, 50 overs)	**266**	

Fall of wickets 1-7, 2-13, 3-39, 4-65, 5-172, 6-189, 7-207, 8-213, 9-252.

Bowling Miraz 6.1-0-46-2; E Hossain 10-0-45-3; Rahman 10-1-43-1; Ahmed 10-0-54-0; Al Hasan 10-1-39-2; Mahmudullah 3.5-0-33-1.

Umpires Masudur Rahman and M A Gough (England).

● Bangladesh lead three-match series 2-0

Football fixtures

FA Cup: Second round-replay Gillingham v Dagenham & Redbridge (7.15)

SPFL Trust Trophy: Quarter-final Falkirk v Dundee (7.45).

Women's Champions League: Group A Real Madrid v Chelsea (8.0).

Women's League Cup: Group B Sunderland v Leicester (7.30).

Fog and Foakes giving England food for thought

Mike Atherton

Chief Cricket Correspondent, Multan



Teams for tomorrow's second Test in Multan

Pakistan (possible)	Age	Tests	Runs	Bat avge	Wkts	Bowl avge
Abdullah Shafique	23	8	856	65.84	–	–
Imam-ul-Haq	26	17	1,142	38.06	0	–
Azhar Ali	37	96	7,097	42.49	8	77.62
*Babar Azam	28	43	3,262	47.97	2	15.50
Agha Salman	29	3	166	27.66	2	102.00
†Mohammad Rizwan	30	25	1,307	40.84	70ct	2st
Faheem Ashraf	28	14	636	31.80	24	34.08
Mohammad Nawaz	28	5	98	14.00	15	27.20
Zahid Mahmood	34	1	18	9.00	6	53.16
Naseem Shah	19	14	77	6.41	38	36.94
Hasan Ali	28	21	366	13.55	77	24.57

England (from)	Age	Tests	Runs	Bat avge	Wkts	Bowl avge
Ben Duckett	28	5	217	24.11	–	–
Zak Crawley	24	29	1,535	29.51	–	–
†Ollie Pope	24	31	1,611	32.22	35ct	1st
Joe Root	31	125	10,600	50.00	47	47.85
Harry Brook	23	2	252	84.00	–	–
*Ben Stokes	31	87	5,470	35.98	193	31.89
Will Jacks	24	1	54	27.00	6	33.16
†Ben Foakes	29	17	746	31.08	48ct	5st
Jack Leach	31	30	417	13.45	98	34.15
James Anderson	40	176	1,291	9.22	672	26.15
Ollie Robinson	28	12	182	10.70	56	20.21
Mark Wood	32	26	564	15.24	82	31.91

Umpires Aleem Dar (Pakistan) and Marais Erasmus (South Africa).

Series details *England lead three-match series 1-0*
First Test England won by 74 runs (Rawalpindi).
Second: Tomorrow-Tuesday (Multan).
Third: Dec 17-21 (Karachi). *All live on Sky Sports Cricket*

South and west we came, through corn fields, vast open farmland, orange orchards and mango farms and, finally, after eight hours on the road, into the southern Punjab and the ancient city of Multan. It is a city of summer heat and dust and saints and burial grounds, the downtown hustle and bustle contrasting with the magnificent Mughal architecture that dots the landscape. The relative calm of the diplomatic enclave of Islamabad seems a world away.

For England's cricketers here, even more so than in Rawalpindi, the biggest challenge in a quest to remove the draw from their cricketing dictionary is likely to be the clock. The early evening dusk and morning fog, exacerbated by the time of year is likely to squeeze the Test match and concertina each day's play even more than during the first Test. At the designated start time yesterday, for example, the ground was shrouded in mist.

First-class cricket has not been played here in December for over a decade, and Test cricket returns for the first time in 16 years. It was in Multan, 17 years ago, that Marcus Trescothick led England in the absence of the injured Michael Vaughan (he made 193 in the first innings) and Trescothick, now the batting coach, was one of more than a dozen from the England party yesterday who enjoyed the chance to play the local Nick Faldo-designed golf course, the best in Pakistan. Most of them play golf Bazball-style, whacking it miles and taking on every hazard.

The security detail to pull off the logistical challenges around this Test series needs to be seen to be believed, and for the golf trip the players' bulletproof van was guarded by dozens of open-topped jeeps, with armed soldiers primed and ready. The area of the city around the players' hotel has been essentially shut down for the week, with schools closed for the teams' arrivals and businesses in the vicinity of the ground shut for the duration of the match.

After a travel day and a day at leisure, there will be one further optional practice before the second Test begins. One of the features of this new England side under Brendon McCullum and Ben Stokes is a relaxed approach to nets once the real action starts. They practised hard in Abu Dhabi before the tour began, and with three Tests coming so quickly, and only three days between each, emphasis is on complete commitment during playing days but then enjoyment and relaxation. Batsmen ready themselves mentally, and bowlers ensure that they are physically rested. The days of players saying they are "feeling good in the nets" as a buffer against poor performance are gone.

The conversation will turn to how to win a game that may be shortened by the best part of a day's worth of overs. The onus will be on quick scoring, for sure, and funky fields, but there may be a conversation around whether it is best to bat first or second as well, depending on the pitch. In a shortened game, it could be best to try to bat only once. Mind you, the word is that Pakistan wanted a turner in Rawalpindi — it didn't transpire — and have asked for one here. We shall see.

The balance of England's side is not straightforward. With three seamers and three spinners, they had all bases covered in the opening game, barring some extreme pace, but only because of the illness to Ben Foakes. England got lucky to some degree with Foakes's last-minute absence, because it meant a debut for Will Jacks, who took six wickets in the first innings with his off spin. Without Jacks, and with Livingstone subsequently injured, they would have been a bowler light.

Pakistan v England
Second Test in Multan Tomorrow, 5am (GMT)
Sky Sports Main Event, 4.30am. Highlights 6pm-7pm and 9pm-10pm

So whether Foakes automatically returns in place of Livingstone, who has flown home for treatment, remains to be seen. Ollie Pope did an excellent job in the circumstances — he took one left-handed screamer on the final day and because the heat is not extreme was not worried about batting No 3 after a long stint in the field — and although he is not a long-term option behind the stumps, he could provide the opportunity to play the extra bowler. If Foakes does return, another change to the attack would be possible, given that Mark Wood is fit again.

It was noticeable that Pakistan's top order was worked over in the second innings by some short-pitched bowling even on the slowest of pitches. It was a ploy that brought two new-ball wickets — the plan was Joe Root's idea, apparently — one of whom was Babar Azam. Babar was put out of a Test at Lord's in 2018 when he was hit by a short ball from Stokes, and, more recently in the T20 series, it was noticeable that Wood bowled quickly and short at him.

Babar is one of the best around, averaging an incredible 81 in home Tests, and any chance to put a home captain under pressure should be taken. His team appeared a little shocked by the extreme boldness of England's approach in any case. An injury to Haris Rauf did not help their cause and with the continued absence of Shaheen Shah Afridi their bowling stocks are thinner than normal. Hasan Ali, Rauf's possible replacement, will at least bring a bit of much-needed vigour and extra experience.

Multan is abuzz with England's arrival, especially so after the captivating final day in 'Pindi, and the reception has been a warm one, with the expectation of decent crowds again. In the foyer of the team hotel there stands a near life-sized poster of a fresh-faced Anderson from the 2005 tour, with a message of welcome on his return 17 years later.

What a freak of nature Anderson is. He is a far better bowler now than then: in the past decade he has taken his wickets at 21.07 in Asia and in the last decade all told, between the age of 30 and 40, he has taken 388 Test wickets. Mind you, on the golf course yesterday he was dusted up by Zak Crawley. Youth, occasionally, must have its day.



Root bats left-handed in Rawalpindi. He will have to bat quickly in Multan, with

Stokes: I will need even

Simon Wilde Multan

Ben Stokes's supercharged England team have managed to contrive eight positive results out of eight Tests, winning seven of them, but while even the death of a monarch during the Oval match and one of the world's flattest pitches in Rawalpindi could not stop them pushing on to victory, they may meet their match this week in the form of Multan's fog and smog. Stokes was not having it, of course. "We might have to get even more adventurous," the captain said.

A member of the groundstaff posted a video of the stadium, situated some 40 minutes from the city centre, at about 9am showing the field and stands shrouded in fog. Forecasters are predicting that visibility may not improve until 11am each day, an hour after the scheduled start.

Sunset here, at about 5.15pm, is slightly later than Rawalpindi, but such is the smog that it is expected the light will fade early and won't be rescued by the floodlights at a stadium that has not staged a Test for 16 years. An incoming flight due to land at midday yesterday was delayed by four hours because of fog at the city's international airport.

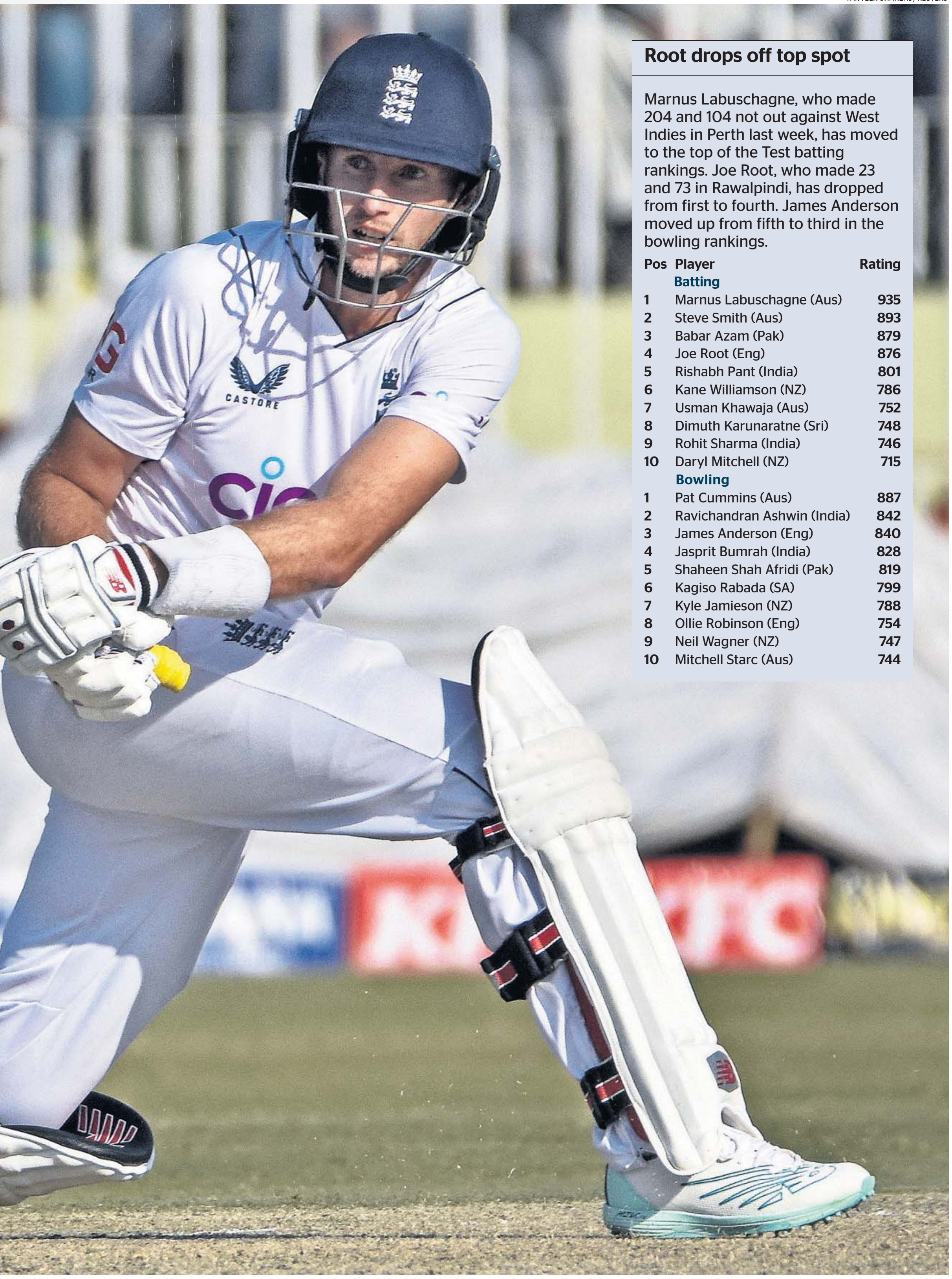
Asked how much more inventive his captaincy could get after his daring but perfectly timed declaration in the first Test, Stokes said: "We might see actually in this Test, if it does pan out the way that it could potentially with the late start and early finish.

"We could end up having only 300-350 overs in the Test match. We might have to get even more adventurous with what we do. We'll see."

Might there be more funky declarations? "There could be."

"If you get a good amount of time out of a Test match, I'll always be trying to plan and talk to Baz [Brendon McCullum, the head coach] about ways in which we can try and force a result, either way," Stokes said. "You might see something even more out there than

TANVEER SHAHZAD/REUTERS



Root drops off top spot

Marnus Labuschagne, who made 204 and 104 not out against West Indies in Perth last week, has moved to the top of the Test batting rankings. Joe Root, who made 23 and 73 in Rawalpindi, has dropped from first to fourth. James Anderson moved up from fifth to third in the bowling rankings.

Pos	Player	Rating
	Batting	
1	Marnus Labuschagne (Aus)	935
2	Steve Smith (Aus)	893
3	Babar Azam (Pak)	879
4	Joe Root (Eng)	876
5	Rishabh Pant (India)	801
6	Kane Williamson (NZ)	786
7	Usman Khawaja (Aus)	752
8	Dimuth Karunaratne (Sri)	748
9	Rohit Sharma (India)	746
10	Daryl Mitchell (NZ)	715
	Bowling	
1	Pat Cummins (Aus)	887
2	Ravichandran Ashwin (India)	842
3	James Anderson (Eng)	840
4	Jasprit Bumrah (India)	828
5	Shaheen Shah Afridi (Pak)	819
6	Kagiso Rabada (SA)	799
7	Kyle Jamieson (NZ)	788
8	Ollie Robinson (Eng)	754
9	Neil Wagner (NZ)	747
10	Mitchell Starc (Aus)	744

hours of play at a premium. Inset, Atherton and the England players are given an armed convey on their way to play golf

funkier tactics for extra-short days

you've seen here. I might declare without batting one day, who knows?

"If the chance presents itself again to do something similar [to Rawalpindi], the lads will have a lot of confidence knowing we were able to do it there."

Problems with fog and smog are not unknown in the industrialised cities of northern Pakistan and India. Fog once led to the loss of all five days of a Test in Faisalabad, about 150 miles northeast of here, and England Tests in Mohali and Delhi have also been hampered by fog, although it did not stop Tony Greig's team winning at the old Feroz Shah Kotla stadium in 1976-77.

When Sri Lanka played a Test in Delhi in 2017, so bad was the air quality that bowlers vomited, fielders wore face masks and oxygen cylinders were installed in the visitors' dressing room. As a consequence Sri Lanka called on the ICC to deploy air quality meters. That suggestion was not taken up, with the onus instead left on match officials to work with teams and their medical staffs to determine what constitutes acceptable playing conditions.

The reason Lahore is not being used as a venue for this series is because of concerns over smog there at this time of year. Multan is a challenge on a number of fronts: in terms of its annual rainfall of about 175mm, it is among the driest venues on the Test circuit, on a par with Karachi, which hosts the final Test next week. Inzamam-ul-Haq, whose home city this is, was once forced to retire suffering from dehydration (he had scored 105 at the time).

Stokes, speaking at the team hotel while most of his team were golfing, intimated that the adverse weather could result in a late — and interesting — call on selection.

A shorter game would mean less need to worry about resting bowlers or making sure the batting runs deep, creating more flexibility. It seems possible therefore that Ollie Pope may retain the gloves even though Ben Foakes has recovered from his viral infection, and that the only change could be Mark Wood for the injured Liam Livingstone.

Alternatively, the loss of Livingstone's leg spin (a potentially game-changing type of bowling) may result in a call-up for the uncapped Rehan Ahmed in place of Will Jacks on the basis that a short game would afford an inexperienced cricketer more protection.

"We found ourselves in that situation [of a virus hitting the squad] and we still managed to pick a team strong enough to win," Stokes said. "We're going to have a conversation about what we feel is the best route to go.

"With the morning [fog] situation, we're going to have to take that into [selection] consideration if we feel like that's going to be the case every day. We'll have a conversation about the best option to force a result considering we might have to deal with a late start in the morning and then coming off early because of the light. There are a few different options we are going to lay out."



A pared-back Barmy Army in Rawalpindi make their presence heard in the crowd

Journey to Multan is not for faint-hearted

About 50 England fans are making their way to the most testing venue on the global circuit, writes **Simon Wilde**

We have all seen the scenes on television when the England team play Test matches at some of the great venues around the world, whether it is Cape Town, Mumbai, Sydney or Barbados. There are thousands of supporters in the stands, their St George's Cross flags draped over railings; they bask in the sunshine, revel in the cricket and contemplate a good evening of food and drink.

The attractions are not quite so obvious in Pakistan, where alcohol is hard to come by and conditions can test the toughest constitutions. Even within Pakistan, Multan is on another level. This is not a city accustomed to westerners. The players travel with armed guards along highways blocked to the public. Travelling journalists get guards but not clear roads.

Even so, a small number of England fans have travelled to what may be considered the most testing venue on the global circuit (the most testing but not the most inhospitable, because the locals are a joy). Two supporters' travel groups, Barmy Army Travel and Black Opal, both have small batches of supporters here for what is England's first Test tour to the country since 2005.

The numbers for the Multan Test will be some of the smallest for an England Test abroad — slightly fewer than attended Rawalpindi and many fewer than will come to cosmopolitan Karachi for the third match.

"We have 15 people in Multan on official packages, five fewer than in Rawalpindi, and we will have ten more for Karachi," Chris Millard, of the Barmy Army group, said. "We also have about 30 independents in Multan, people who are members of the Barmy Army who will sit with us in the ground, but have travelled independently. This number will go up to around 150 for Karachi.

"These are your die-hard fans, people who want to tick off venues and get to as many grounds in the world as they can.

"We were blown away with the hospitality at the first Test and we are hoping to use this tour as a precedent for 2024 [when England are due to return for three more Tests] when we hope to get three times the number. We want to be able to tell the tale back home that although it's not everyone's first destination it is a unique place. The trailblazers of this tour were brave to come. They have shown that it is safe and it is possible to have a good time.

"Peoples' expectations were low but we have been blown away by how hospitable the locals have been. They are so happy we are here and that people are touring the country again. That England won the first Test in the way they did helps massively. It was an amazing feat and can only help sell Pakistan as a destination."

Those coming to Multan have had to send their names to the Pakistan Cricket Board's security team so that the local authorities know of their presence, but otherwise they are free to move around. Most of those with the Barmy Army are arriving in Multan today after a couple of days of sightseeing around Lahore.

Black Opal had 13 people in Rawalpindi and will have 14 in Karachi, but there are only four in Multan. "Most have chosen to go to New Zealand [in February]," Martin Denyer, a tour leader, said. "We have big numbers there. Those who are here have had this on their bucket list and were always coming. They want to complete the set [of countries].

"It's more challenging than some destinations but we are all very excited to be here and very reassured. We've had a great welcome.

"We think that after this tour, the images people will see back home and how welcoming everyone has been, that more will come when we return in October 2024. We hope that Lahore will be one of the venues. Our group goes to Lahore after this Test and will visit the Wagah border, and then on to Karachi."

For the West Indies last winter, the Barmy Army had about 670 on travel packages and more than 3,000 independents; for the Test in Cape Town in January 2020 they had 750 on packages and 5,000 independents.

Next winter's schedule involves a 50-over World Cup in India followed by five Tests in India after Christmas. "Not having another South Africa Test tour for a while is crippling for some travel groups," Millard said. "You simply can't take the same numbers to the subcontinent. Hopefully this tour will help change that."

15
England fans in Multan on official Barmy Army group packages — five fewer than they had in Rawalpindi

Ten Hag plans for life after Ronaldo

The words from Erik ten Hag on Cristiano Ronaldo's departure were succinct and without emotion (Charlotte Duncker writes).

"He has gone now, it is in the past," the Manchester United manager said yesterday. He spoke of the Portuguese's departure for the first time and was keen to look to the future.

A friendly against La Liga side Cadiz, as part of a week-long training camp, was the first time for the post-Ronaldo United to show what they are made of. Of course, it was not really a glimpse as to where United are up to under Ten Hag with 13 of the first team squad away on World Cup duty, but nevertheless it was the chance for some fringe and youth players to show what they had to offer.

"Normally we don't have this break and many players are at the World Cup so there are positions available," Ten Hag said.

But, on the whole, those away with their national teams will have little to fear on their return as Ten Hag's side, in which all ten outfield players were changed at the break, lost 4-2. Here are the players and positions that Ten Hag will have taken particular interest in.

JON NAZCA/REUTERS



Garnacho's skills drew audible gasps from the crowd in Cadiz even if United lost 4-2 in last night's friendly match

Full backs
The first-half starting XI was as strong as Ten Hag could have gone with, minus David de Gea. Ten Hag is lacking in depth at full back and it showed. Aaron Wan-Bissaka and Brandon Williams had their first starts under the Dutchman but did little to show why they should be considered ahead of Diogo Dalot and Luke Shaw. —Wan-Bissaka was beaten numerous times and was weak at defending crosses into the box while Williams gave away a needless free kick which led to Cadiz's opener. Both players have been injured but they were lacking quality on and off the ball, which comes down to more than rustiness.

Alejandro Garnacho
Two minutes in and the teenager had drawn an gasp from the crowd. He went on a driving run into the box, nutmegged one defender, skinned another and then got a shot off. The attacking flair he brings to the side gets supporters out of their seats and while it was only a friendly, he was determined to showcase his talent.

Zidane Iqbal
There were some stern words from Victor Lindelof over his positioning for Cadiz's second goal but overall he was a positive influence in the middle for United. He was keen to get on the ball and dictate the play, driving forward to link up with Garnacho.

It paid off when he won a penalty after a nice one-two with Anthony Martial producing a goal for Martial and a reward for Iqbal's tenacity.

Kobbie Mainoo
The 17-year-old midfielder was one of ten outfield changes Ten Hag made at the break and his impact was almost instant after his cute finish from a short corner levelled the score at 2-2. His goal contribution makes him worthy of a mention but the entire XI, apart from Martin Dúbravka, who flattered to deceive in goal, played with desire and passion in a bid to impress Ten Hag. It may be too early to talk of filling a Ronaldo-shaped hole but there is enough in their ranks for the Dutchman to be excited about.

Refreshed Miedema in sharp form

Arsenal *Miedema 16*	**1**
Juventus	**0**

Women's Champions League
Molly Hudson

Arsenal continue to reap the rewards of Vivianne Miedema's fortnight-long hiatus from football after her goal meant they extended their lead at the top of group C in the Champions League with a 1-0 victory over Juventus.

Miedema, 26, had told manager Jonas Eidevall that she "didn't feel mentally and physically ready to play" after continuous football for club and country for several years, before her holiday in Adelaide at the start of November, and has looked reinvigorated upon her return.

Juventus have proved stubborn opposition in Europe – unbeaten in their last seven women's Champions League matches — and drew 1-1 with Arsenal in the reverse fixture just 13 days ago.

Arsenal began the brighter, Stina Blackstenius having a goal disallowed for offside, but moments later the Swedish forward beat the offside trap to deliver a ball from the right flank, for Miedema to side-foot home.

Arsenal remain unbeaten after four games, they're three points clear of second-placed Lyon and are favourites to progress from a tricky group.

Wimbledon wrong to retreat

Rick Broadbent



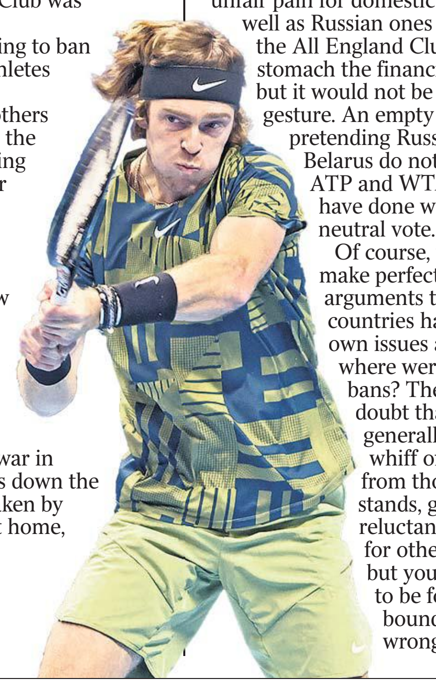
In February, Andrey Rublev won a doubles tournament with his Ukrainian partner. A few days later the Russian was playing in Dubai when he heard his country had invaded Denys Molchanov's homeland. "We are normal people," he said at the time. "We are not into politics. Sport brings us together. Simple. Peace to everyone." And for some that will be the common-sense bedrock of Wimbledon's decision if it lifts its ban on Russian players next year. Except it was not simple then and it isn't now.

That the ATP has threatened to kick out the LTA if it maintains its ban is appalling. The LTA has had to stomach a $1 million (about £820,000) fine for barring Russian and Belarusian men from this year's grass-court season, as well as the one it got from the WTA in the summer. The price of moral backbone for the All England Club was £207,000.

It is always troubling to ban an entire nation's athletes because of the misdemeanours of others and many will think the ATP solution of letting them compete under neutral flags is the pragmatic solution. I disagree and would like to see Wimbledon find new balls in 2023.

Why? Because there is a danger that, nine months on, people are now becoming inured to the daily reports of war in Ukraine as it trickles down the news agenda, overtaken by trauma and crises at home, and to bend to pragmatism is to risk a blind eye. A stance would cause unfair pain for domestic players as well as Russian ones — although the All England Club could stomach the financial variety — but it would not be an empty gesture. An empty gesture is pretending Russia and Belarus do not exist, as the ATP and WTA have done with the neutral vote.

Of course, you can make perfectly valid arguments that other countries have their own issues and so where were those bans? There is also no doubt that there is generally a strong whiff of hypocrisy from those taking stands, given their reluctance to do it for other atrocities, but you don't have to be forever bound by old wrongs.



The Russian player Rublev has said sport should not get involved in politics

The bare fact is that Vladimir Putin has long basked in the reflected legitimacy and approval that comes from sporting success. It is why he was so keen to get the 2013 World Athletics Championships, the 2014 Winter Olympics and finally the 2018 World Cup. When reporters accused him of filling even a student team with Olympic champions at the World University Games, he said: "I'd like to advise them to take up sports and go and see a doctor. Try Viagra."

It doesn't really matter if sport is important. What matters is that Putin thinks it is. Why else did he hold a pro-war rally in March in Moscow's old Olympic Stadium, flanked by gymnasts and figure-skaters wearing 'Z' symbols? Sport does not get more symbolic.

Using sport to normalise abhorrent behaviour by states or leaders is nothing new, even this year, and the isolation of Wimbledon and the LTA means their stance will change nothing. It will, however, serve a reminder to Russian people that some of the sporting world finds Putin a vile, irredeemable despot whose crimes cannot be ignored.

CONTINUED FROM BACK
Government criticises ATP fine

possibility of further fines. We will carefully consider our response and we await the outcome of our appeal against the WTA's decision and sanction."

There is also frustration inside the LTA that ATP players can play in Russian exhibition events without sanction, while the new United Cup mixed-gender team tournament being played in Australia next month will earn ATP ranking points despite excluding Russian players.

The ATP has said it will put the fine towards support for humanitarian relief in Ukraine.

Michelle Donelan, the secretary of state for digital, culture, media and sport, criticised the move by the tours.

She said: "Over the past year, the vast majority of the international sporting community have stood shoulder to shoulder in condemning Putin's unprovoked and barbaric actions in Ukraine.

"The UK has taken a world-leading role to this international response. We are clear that sport cannot be used to legitimise this deadly invasion, and that athletes representing the Russian or Belarusian states should be banned from competing in other countries.

"Despite widespread condemnation, the international tennis tours are determined to be outcasts in this, with investment in the growth of our domestic game hampered as a result.

"This is the wrong move by both the ATP and WTA. I urge them to think carefully about the message this sends, and to reconsider."

Touré: Name didn't get me Wigan job

Stuart Brennan

KoloTouré has refuted the notion that he only landed the Wigan Athletic job on the basis of his name.

The former Arsenal, Manchester City and Liverpool defender has been handed his first managerial appointment after serving as a coach for five years under Brendan Rodgers at Celtic and Leicester City.

That led to accusations that Wigan, second from bottom in the Championship, had gone for a glamorous name rather than opt for an fire-fighting option, with Mick McCarthy one of several experienced managers in the reckoning.

Touré accepted the criticism, saying it was up to him to prove them wrong, but added: "I started my coaching badges in 2014 when I was playing at Liverpool. It's strange but every manager I've worked with, they all told me: 'You're going to be a manager one day.' It was incredible.

"I'm quite vocal, I tried to help my team and that was the feeling I had for a long time. When I finished my career, I never stopped. I learnt all the skills you need to be a manager."

Touré played under Arsène Wenger and Roberto Mancini as well as Rodgers. "You take a little bit from each of them and make it your own," said Touré. "Arsène was an unbelievable man-manager. You need to love the players. You need to like them. You need to make them feel important. They are human beings. The closer you keep them, the more respect you give them, the more they can give you."

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER MARC ASPLAND

'Bazball' has shown way for English rugby

Steve James says that cricket's philosophy of cutting the nonsense and playing to team strengths has much to commend it



Eddie Jones loved his cricketing analogies during his tenure as the England head coach, none more so than when referencing the famous Bodyline Ashes series before his team's tour to Australia in 2016.

That was a time when things appeared very simple under Jones. There was nothing subtle or complicated about his Bodyline allusion. In cricketing terms that was, in the 1932-33 series, England physically dominating Australia, with their short-pitched bowling unnerving the great Donald Bradman. England's rugby players did exactly the same in Australia in 2016, winning the series 3-0, as their aggression and physicality, with a rampaging James Haskell to the fore, stunned the home side.

The grand slam before that tour was similarly straightforward in its conception, with a strong focus on the traditional English strengths at set piece and then Billy Vunipola, the No 8, crashing over the gainline to create quick ball and allow the scrum half, Ben Youngs, to orchestrate the "ruck and run" game that had been so successful for Jones with Japan.

By the end Jones was just trying to be too clever in all respects, whether that was in selection, tactics or language ("finishers"). It was little surprise that confusion reigned.

It was a similar story in Wales with Wayne Pivac. It is easily forgotten that Warren Gatland would have remained in post after taking his side to the 2019 World Cup semi-final, but he simply wasn't asked.

Wales wanted to expand their game, to return to more of the free-flowing "Welsh way" that had characterised the success of the 1970s and beyond, and Pivac had been doing something along those lines with Scarlets.

The problem was that Pivac soon realised that it was very difficult to play that way at Test level, with its relentless intensity and all-enveloping defences. He also had a group of players used to "Warrenball" under Gatland, which is a term that the Kiwi coach strongly dislikes, mainly because it is actually a method of play very similar to most others at international level, concentrating heavily on superiority at the physical contact areas and an uncompromising blitz defence.

Most of Wales's best performances under Pivac were when returning to Gatland's template, but players were often befuddled by the changing of message as campaigns wore on. They were also knackered by the length and volume of training sessions in trying to implement those messages, with selections becoming more eccentric as the pressure grew.

It is stating the bleedin' obvious to say that results matter, but ultimately both Jones and Pivac had lost sight of that, of just ensuring that you beat the opposition in front of you, with their minds wandering elsewhere, looking ahead of themselves to next year's World Cup, for example, and with both of them no longer staying true to themselves, as their sides lost their DNA (England had lost their forward dominance and Wales did not really appear to know what they were trying to do).

Both of them might have thought back to their first proper games in charge: England's scrappy 15-9 victory at Murrayfield and Wales's 42-0 hammering of Italy at home. By this year England had forgotten how to problem-solve and to win those tight games, and, well, Wales couldn't even beat Italy, or indeed Georgia.

Which brings us to England's cricketers. Their first match under the head coach Brendon McCullum and the captain Ben Stokes was at Lord's against New Zealand. It was a tight affair, and they had some luck, as well as a magnificent Joe Root century to see them home.

The cricket played was not really in the "Bazball" manner that we have seen since, but it allowed such methods to flourish later in the summer on pitches that did not do as much as Lord's, but the point is that England did not rush to change.

Cricket is obviously very different from rugby, in that so much of the coaching is based on the individual rather than the collective, but it is surely true in both sports that the balance between simplicity and detail is vital. It was fascinating listening to McCullum being interviewed by my colleague Mike Atherton on Sky Sports recently. McCullum was asked about his coaching philosophy.

"I don't really know what sort of coach I am," he replied. "All I can be is authentic. I love people and I love seeing talent flourish. I hate talent being stymied and suffocated."

It was a wonderfully refreshing answer in an age where coaches can talk a lot of nebulous nonsense. Getting the best out of your players, whether individually or collectively, is the absolute key. In rugby that means players wanting to run through a brick wall for you. At the start England's players wanted to do that for Jones, but eventually they tired of his intensity and eccentric selections.

Environment is everything too. Discipline and relaxation must form a compelling and workable blend. Pivac's Wales had lost rather too much of the former apparently.

The most critical advance made by the England cricket team is their attitude to failure. Cricketers by nature have always been fearful and suspicious, but under Stokes and McCullum their mantra of "running towards the danger" has been laid bare at every juncture. Stokes wouldn't have kicked the ball out at the end of the recent New Zealand match for sure, as Marcus Smith did when England had the chance of a famous victory at Twickenham.

Stokes's attitude was probably best summed up when he was out on the second morning of the Rawalpindi Test. He had hit his first ball for six and was bowled two balls later by Naseem Shah for 41 off only 18 balls. Naseem gave him a bit of a send-off, but Stokes just laughed at him, as if to emphasise that his wicket did not matter. His team already had Pakistan on toast.

There is a lot more to England's approach than just "going out and smashing it" – some situations clearly require more caution — but what McCullum and Stokes have shown is the importance of clear and simple leadership, and Rob Key as managing director has — with a memo to Bill Sweeney at the RFU here — also shown that it pays to have someone who knows their onions when appointing such people.

Neither England nor Wales will be playing "Bazball" rugby next year — it doesn't suit their strengths — but you can be sure that Gatland will again bring confidence, clarity and uncomplicatedness to Wales. He will forget about the future and focus on every single Six Nations match with an unerring necessity to win it (just as Stokes did in Rawalpindi, with two Tests still to play in the series). Can Steve Borthwick do the same for England?



Vunipola thrived on the no-nonsense approach of Jones's early England days. McCullum, below, keeps detail to a minimum

The McCullum effect ● W ● L ● D

England's results since the beginning of last year - three wins in 19 before McCullum took over, seven wins in eight since





Wales plans hit by Anscombe injury

Warren Gatland's second stint as Wales head coach has begun with the news that the Ospreys fly half Gareth Anscombe is likely to miss the start of the Six Nations in February through injury.

Anscombe limped off during Wales's final game of the autumn against Australia and has not played since. He was Gatland's first-choice fly half during Wales's grand-slam winning season in 2019 and the New Zealander recently picked out Anscombe as someone who impressed in the autumn. "I don't know the answer to how long Gareth will be out, but it is unlikely he will be able to play at the start of the Six Nations," Ospreys head coach Toby Booth said.

"He's got a shoulder blade injury similar to the one that Justin Tipuric suffered. He's a resilient guy and we just want to get him back playing as quickly as possible."

That Booth likened the injury to Tipuric's suggests that Wales may have to plan without Anscombe for the Six Nations. Tipuric suffered his injury playing for the British & Irish Lions against Japan in the summer of 2021 and did not play again for 14 months.

Darcy Graham, the Scotland wing, is also likely to miss the start of the Six Nations having been ruled out until February because of a knee injury. Graham suffered medial ligament damage during Edinburgh's defeat by Munster on Saturday.



Anscombe is set to miss the start of the Six Nations with a shoulder injury

Venues confirmed for F1 sprints

Formula One

Azerbaijan, Qatar, Austria, Brazil, Austin in the USA and Spa in Belgium will be the venues for the six sprint races in the Formula One calendar from the 2023 season.

The new campaign is set to open in Bahrain on March 5 and close in Abu Dhabi on November 26.

After the announcement that next year's Chinese Grand Prix in Shanghai has been cancelled amid continuing coronavirus restrictions in the country, it is understood F1 bosses are in dialogue with a number of venues about filling the gap to ensure a record 24 rounds still go ahead in 2023.

Sprint sessions were introduced during 2021, qualifying shifted to Friday and an extra 100km race slotted into Saturday's schedule which then set the grid for the Grand Prix on Sunday.

Selections for 2023 were made after research into the most suitable tracks, including overtaking opportunities, close racing and high-speed sections.

F1 president Stefano Domenicali said: "We have seen a hugely positive reaction to the F1 Sprint events during the first two years, and we can't wait to bring more action to fans next year."

Borthwick's priority: replace

Alex Lowe
Rugby Correspondent



When Steve Borthwick took charge of Leicester Tigers, there was one word used repeatedly by the players to describe his impact at the club as he guided them from their lowest ebb to winning the Gallagher Premiership title last season. Clarity. The rugby Leicester produced has not been especially effervescent but it has been mighty effective. With a dominant set piece and George Ford running the strategy at fly half, there was a clarity of purpose. Borthwick coaches with the same forensic attention to detail, the same demand for high standards and the same work ethic that defined his career as a player for Bath, Saracens and England.

If negotiations proceed as expected between the RFU and Leicester, Borthwick will become the second England captain of the professional era to be appointed as head coach, after Martin Johnson in 2008. He is infinitely more suited to the role, having worked in Test rugby under Eddie Jones for seven years before overseeing a transformation in fortunes at Welford Road.

His immediate challenge will be to bring that same clarity of thought to England, to untangle the thinking that had strangulated England's progress over the past couple of years and re-establish a sense of identity. He was part of that process with Japan before the 2015 World Cup and a huge factor in doing the same when an assistant coach of England.

Being the No1, though, is different and Borthwick will have some issues to deal with as England prepare for a run of nine Tests — only five of them competitive — before the opening game of the World Cup.

COACHING TEAM

"I'm not afraid to surround myself with people who have more knowledge in areas than I do," Borthwick said when discussing his management style. That needs to be central to the recruitment of his management team.

At Leicester, Borthwick has recruited a young, dynamic, highly intelligent coaching team. The atmosphere he creates in the Leicester coaching room is collaborative; even the most junior coach has the freedom to challenge ideas and test out their own.

Aled Walters, the strength and conditioning coach who won the World Cup with South Africa, is an integral personality at Leicester and will be so with England; Kevin Sinfield too.

Nobody has more knowledge of the lineout and forwards than Borthwick. He must decide whether, as head coach, he can afford to be hands-on in the nitty gritty of set-piece coaching. If he is to be authentic, then he probably feels he needs to but that means a balance is required elsewhere in his set-up.

The first call Borthwick should make is to persuade the former New Zealand coach Wayne Smith to come out of retirement, at least for one short sprint to the World Cup. The man is a genius without ego and Borthwick would benefit enormously from his experience as a right-hand man and to run the attack. Ironically, Stuart Lancaster would work really well in this role too but that ship has sailed, not only because it is England but also because he is taking charge of Racing 92 next season.

Ian Peel at Saracens is a scrum coach of international standard. And, boy, do England need one.

Lowe's XV to face Scotland in Six Nations opener

1 E Genge, 2 J George, 3 K Sinckler
4 M Itoje, 5 O Chessum
6 T Curry, 8 A Dombrandt, 7 B Earl
9 J Van Poortvliet
10 O Farrell
12 H Slade
13 O Lawrence
11 T Freeman, 15 F Steward, 14 O Hassell-Collins

Will Kelleher's XV

1 E Genge, 2 L Cowan-Dickie, 3 K Sinckler
4 M Itoje, 5 C Lawes (if fit)
6 T Curry, 8 A Dombrandt, 7 B Earl
9 J Van Poorvliet
10 G Ford
12 O Farrell
13 O Lawrence
11 T Freeman, 15 F Steward, 14 A Watson

RE-ESTABLISH ENGLAND'S SET PIECE

One of the starkest statistics of 2022 was that England had the worst performing scrum of any country ranked in the world's top ten. Sources have told The Times that England's scrum detail has not been good enough. Borthwick will not stand for that.

The question is whether some of it is mindset: can England dominate at the scrum when there has been such a demand for them to play an all-court attacking game? Has the balance shifted too far towards players who are effective in the loose?

The next head coach needs to solve this issue. England have scrummaging props available — Dan Cole, Joe Marler, Val Rapava-Ruskin, Trevor Davison — who Borthwick will need to consider. Cole, out of the Test scene since the 2019 World Cup, starts for Leicester ahead of Joe Heyes, England's third-choice tight head.

Borthwick tends to prefer a lineout jumper at blindside flanker, like Jones did. Discount Courtney Lawes for a moment given his concussion issues and England have a promising alternative in Ollie Chessum, although that means no Jack Willis or Ben Earl in the back row. Zach Mercer will be available come the World Cup and he could change the back-row dynamic by slotting in at No6 or No8, allowing England to compete better on the floor.

GAME PLAN

Leicester's style of play, which is kick heavy and centred on the physical and territorial battles, is underpinned by information from the data analytics consultancy firm Oval Insights. It also helps when you can recruit some South African beef, a luxury England do not have.

England have been in the process over the past year of trying to develop a new-style attacking system that has worked only in flashes. The RFU panel clearly ran out of confidence that Jones and Martin Gleeson, the attack coach, had time to make it all click for the World Cup.

Borthwick must decide whether to replicate Leicester's kick-pressure game plan or bring a broader approach to England. Smith and Sam Vesty, described by Dan Biggar as the best attack coach in the Gallagher Premiership, would council Borthwick towards the latter.

But if he is wedded to the Leicester way then it is hard to see Vesty being part of the set-up. Smith is is the best chance of helping Borthwick strike the right balance and getting the best out of a back line that has such untapped potential.

SELECTION

Ultimately, this can separate a good coach from a Test coach, especially in a country like England were there are so many options. By the end of his tenure, Jones seemed to have lost his focus and clarity in this area, capping and discarding more and more players.

The new coach has some big decisions to make — and he should do so by casting aside all previous perceptions, some of which have been damaging to players, others have led to too much loyalty.

Does he play Owen Farrell or Marcus Smith at fly half? Manu Tuilagi and Billy Vunipola, England's power options, were ineffective in the autumn. Does he opt for more dynamic options? Ollie Lawrence, Alex Lozowski, Jack Willis, Ben Earl, Ted Hill and Alex Dombrandt must all come into the equation here.

Accepting that balance is important, Borthwick needs to pick his best players. Alex Coles, for example, was not ready to play lock against Argentina or blindside flanker against the Springboks.

GET FANS ON BOARD

We know how it ended for Jones, with boos around Twickenham; a sense of apathy and disillusionment hanging over the stadium. There is a job to be done here and it will mean going against some of Borthwick's natural instincts (and those of the RFU) by being more open with information, building fresh relationships with the clubs and with the media, so the story can be told with colour, passion and insight. More than ever, rugby fans want detail.

It is a job that Gareth Southgate has done so successfully with the England football team. Borthwick is not a natural in this sphere but, like Southgate, he is a good man with strong morals. The England team may not be loved right now but there are great characters within it and the relationship can be rebuilt quickly. Wins will help — but it requires more than that nowadays.

What new coach must do and the answers he has to find



Joe Marler: Is prop the solution to scrum?

Jones could join Australia set-up for World Cup

Will Kelleher
Deputy Rugby Correspondent

Eddie Jones, the sacked England head coach, can seek a new job immediately, and has been urged to make an emotional return to Australia next year.

The 62-year-old was dismissed by the RFU on Tuesday, ending his seven-year reign at Twickenham. The Times understands that the union did not include a "non-compete" clause in the terms of Jones's severance package, so he is free to be employed elsewhere straight away.

That decision could come back to haunt England, with Rugby Australia interested in speaking to Jones. While the Wallabies have backed their head coach, Dave Rennie, to lead them into the 2023 World Cup — where England and Australia could meet in the quarter-finals — Jones is viewed as a candidate for a director of rugby-style role.

Jones would have the support of former Wallabies if he were to return to the union that sacked him in 2005. His departure came two years after Australia lost the World Cup final to England on home soil, thanks to Jonny Wilkinson's drop-goal in extra time.

Simon Poidevin, the 1991 World Cup-winning Australia flanker who played with Jones in the 1980s and 1990s at their Sydney club side Randwick, thinks that Australia should sign him soon. "I'd have Eddie back in a flash, and I think that's a pretty well-supported view down here," Poidevin said.

"I really hope that Eddie can come back to Australia and take the Wallabies through to the 2027 World Cup. Eddie has always wanted to make amends for 2003."

If Rugby Australia were to move quickly, Jones could be in their coaching team for the 2023 World Cup. In any case Poidevin thinks that Jones should succeed Rennie, leading the Wallabies into the 2025 British & Irish Lions series and their home World Cup in 2027.

"That's the stuff he thrives on, and he's getting to the stage of his career where he has family back here that he probably wants to spend more time seeing, especially his mum," Poidevin said. "I think there's a big opportunity for Australian rugby There are fewer more resilient blokes on the earth; although he may be disappointed for a couple of days, he picks his mojo up pretty quickly. The guy is a proven winner. He can come back from very dark places and succeed again."

Jones also has admirers in the United States. It has been reported in Australia that the Americans would be interested in offering him a long contract to their 2031 World Cup. However, it is understood there is no offer at present.

Poidevin, the 64-year-old who won 59 caps for Australia between 1980 and 1991, was surprised that the RFU sacked Jones. "Nine months before the World Cup I would have thought you wouldn't spook the horses," he said. "It's an unusual decision.

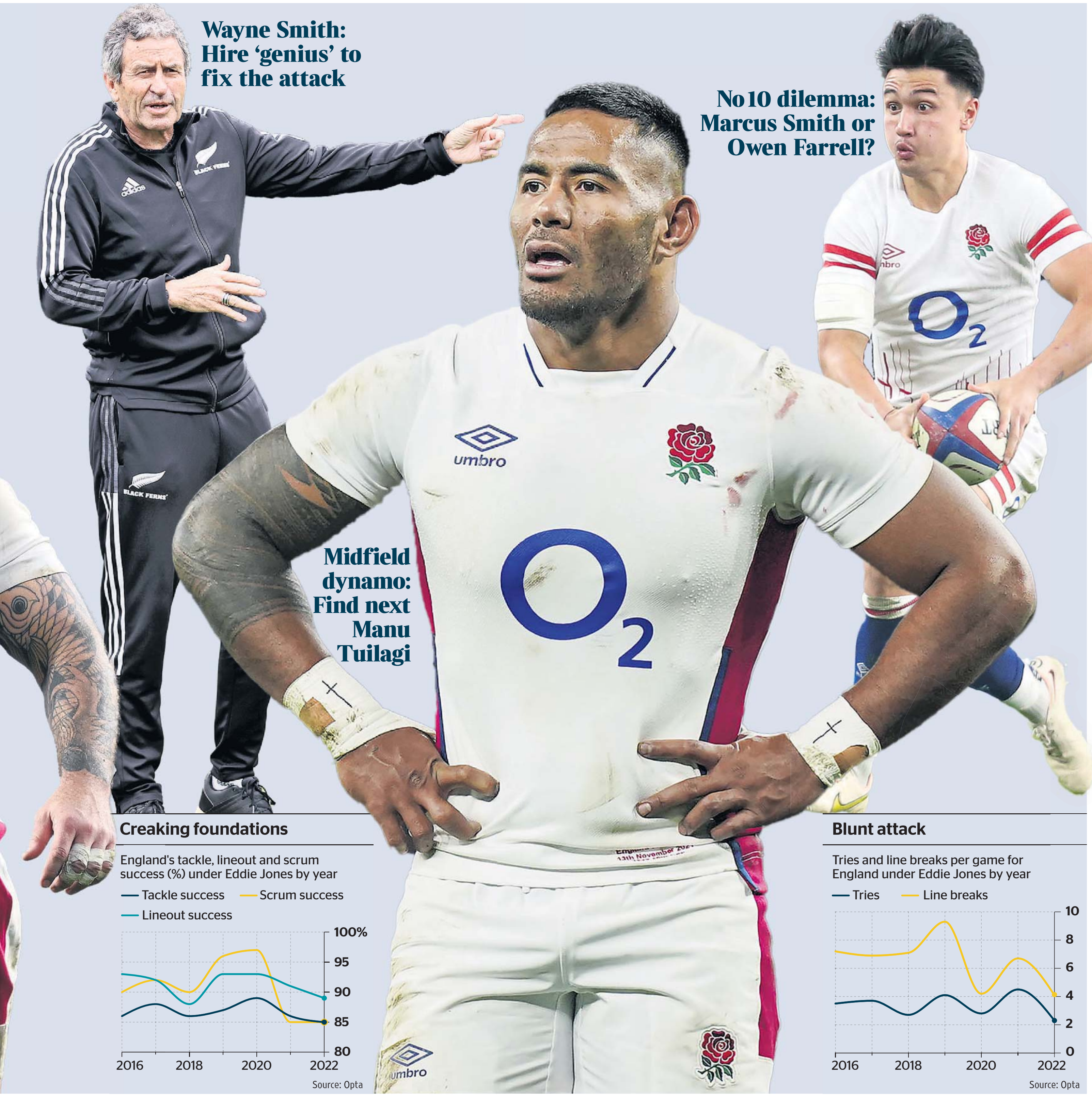
"Eddie's performances in all the World Cups he's coached in have been very fulfilling for the nations he's coached. Given World Cups can require a completely different coaching mentality because of the sudden death nature of the competition, he's had a great history of getting multiple nations through those games.

"I would have thought if England were half smart they would have backed that pedigree to France 2023. I don't think there's been really a high rational thought process on what limited runway there is to the World Cup."

Poidevin hosted Jones at Randwick in Sydney when England toured in July. The team trained at their Coogee Oval ground and Poidevin organised a presentation for Jones, his former club-mate, to honour his commitment to the team.

The club found one of Jones's old club shirts at the home of his late mentor Jeff Sayle, one of his closest allies who died during the 2019 World Cup, and gave it back to him.

confusion with clarity



Poidevin had no sense then that Jones's England had problems. "They were extremely happy, very organised," he said. "Owen Farrell was the centre of all energy in the playing group, it was very impressive. It was far from a team with cracks in it."

It is understood that Jones has lost a lucrative sponsorship deal with the England kit supplier Umbro having been sacked.

When England swapped kit makers Canterbury for Umbro in September 2020, Jones signed his own separate deal to become an Umbro UK ambassador. As part of the contract he undertook media appearances and he worked with the company to develop kit, but that relationship was dependent on him being England head coach and has now ended.

It is not a formality that Steve Borthwick, the probable successor, will take over that Umbro deal.

Baxter 'surprised' RFU sacked coach

Will Kelleher

First things first, Rob Baxter is not going to be involved in any form in the England restoration.

The Exeter Chiefs head coach never applied for a role, was never offered one, and was never in the running to come in on a short or long-term deal, but would be happy if fellow Premiership coach Steve Borthwick were to replace Eddie Jones.

Baxter and his coaches, Rob Hunter, Ali Hepher and Ricky Pellow, have signed fresh new "long-term" deals at Sandy Park and are staying for the rebuild. They are losing Sam Simmonds and Luke Cowan-Dickie to Montpellier next year, have yet to sign up Jack Nowell and Dave Ewers, and lost Jonny Hill to Sale Sharks and Sam Skinner to Edinburgh last summer.

Baxter's focus is on the Heineken Champions Cup with a trip to Castres on Saturday night but he certainly raised an eyebrow when Jones was sacked on Tuesday.

"I thought with the timing getting towards the second half of the season, through the Six Nations and building towards the World Cup, I was a little surprised the decision got made now," he said. "Eddie has been pretty successful if you go game by game. The problem this autumn was quite a few things got magnified and it all came a little bit in one go.

"That was the challenge, the general public as a whole had a bit of unrest about how England were playing and if you have got that then the results don't come, smaller bits get magnified. There seemed be a negative feeling from the general public at Twickenham. That is a magnification of a few things. It is a tough scenario. It does feel like it has happened rather quickly."

When Borthwick ascends to English rugby's throne, as is expected, Baxter and other Englishmen in the system will certainly toast the Leicester Tigers head coach.

"That's what should be happening," he said. "If it's Steve — and I don't think any of us have been told — and it's been based on how he's worked through in the Premiership, that for me would be fantastic. It would show there's a genuine pathway within this country."

FA will try to stop Southgate from quitting

CONTINUED FROM BACK

"armed invaders" had entered Sterling's mansion while his partner and children were at home.

The police said that while they were investigating an alleged burglary, there was no evidence of anyone being armed and the family were not there. Indeed a statement said the police had been unable to find out on what day an alleged crime may have been committed, with the family only discovering that certain items were missing upon their return from Qatar on Saturday.

Since then, there has been a lack of communication from the FA.

While Gareth Southgate, the England manager, stressed on Sunday that it was important to respect Sterling's privacy, the FA has not provided any further information despite the fact the 27-year-old remains a senior member of the squad. Last night the governing body would only confirm that there was no update.

There was further uncertainty yesterday, with Surrey police announcing that they had arrested two men on suspicion of burglary after reports of suspicious activity in Oxshott. The men were spotted acting suspiciously in a garden on Tuesday night. The force issued a statement saying that they did not believe there to be a connection with Sterling's case.

The FA, meanwhile, will look to persuade Southgate not to step down from his role as England manager after the World Cup.

There remains doubt over his long-term future, with speculation growing that he is considering resigning after the tournament, having been in charge of the national team for six years.

FA officials are aware of the possibility of Southgate leaving, but want him to continue in the role and guide England's fortunes at the European Championship in 2024, when the nucleus of the squad will remain available. Southgate and his assistant, Steve Holland, signed three-year contracts a little over 12 months ago which run until December 2024.

Rice missing from training

CONTINUED FROM BACK

journey to the last eight. Kyle Walker, the England defender, said the players had been unaware of Rice being ill until they turned up for the afternoon training session at their Al Wakrah base.

Rice's fitness may influence whether Southgate chooses to move away from the back-four formation that has taken England to the quarter-final as the tournament's top scorers.

Southgate deployed a back three at the previous two major tournaments, when England reached the 2018 World Cup semi-final and Euro 2020 final, but has changed that in Qatar. Walker indicated that England are considering sticking with the back four for the game against the world champions.

"The reason we've got more [possession] is maybe down to the tactics," he said. "We played a [back] five [with two wing-backs] in the Euros and last World Cup. So maybe we can control the ball better when we've got more men further up the field with attacking minds."

Callum Wilson was the only other player missing from training yesterday as the Newcastle United striker was recovering from a minor muscle strain.

Sport

England fear the fog

Multan weather could cut short quest for another win

Mike Atherton, page 68



Borthwick brings clarity

Leicester coach's approach is just what England need

Page 72-73



Wimbledon backs down on Russia ban

Martyn Ziegler, Stuart Fraser

Wimbledon is poised to lift its ban on Russian players next year after British tennis was threatened with expulsion from the ATP Tour.

The ATP, the global governing body for men's tennis, has fined the Lawn Tennis Association $1 million (about £820,000) for banning Russian and Belarusian players from five tournaments during the summer because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It has also threatened to remove the LTA's membership for any repeat ban.

Sources close to the All England Club say that a concern before this year's championships was that a Russian or Belarusian player could make a political gesture supporting the invasion, such as the "Z" T-shirt worn by one Russian gymnast.

However, given that all the players from those countries have been participating on the ATP and Women's Tennis Association tours as neutrals without any such demonstrations, the feeling is there is little chance they would do so in the UK.

Wimbledon will have to make a final decision by April and will also take into account what is happening in Ukraine at that time, but it is also aware that another ban could have an impact on the LTA, which would feel the need to follow suit. Potential government resistance is the main obstacle to readmitting Russian and Belarusian athletes.

The ATP fined the LTA $200,000 for each tournament ban — Queen's Club and Eastbourne plus the Challenger events at Surbiton, Nottingham and Ilkley — and the LTA has said it is "deeply disappointed". Its latest annual turnover was £59.3 million but its grassroots funding from Sport England is only £2.1 million, so the fine will have a significant impact.

Russians and Belarusians were also banned from Wimbledon but it is understood that the ATP does not have the jurisdiction to fine the All England Club.

The LTA has already appealed against a $1 million fine imposed by the WTA for the ban on female Russians and Belarusians.

An LTA spokesman said: "The LTA is deeply disappointed with this outcome. The ATP, in its finding, has shown no recognition of the exceptional circumstances created by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, or the international sporting community and UK government's response to that invasion.

"The ATP appears to regard this matter as a straightforward breach of their rules — with a surprising lack of empathy shown for the situation in Ukraine, and a clear lack of understanding of the unique circumstances the LTA faced.

"The financial impact of both this fine and the WTA's fine will have a material impact on the LTA's ability to develop and host tennis in this country. For example, we had intended to host a number of ATP Challenger-level events to give more opportunities to lower-ranked players in the first quarter of 2023 and will now not be able to do this, particularly given the

Continued on page 70

EDDIE KEOGH/THE FA/GETTY IMAGES





Inside: 12-page World Cup special

Bukayo Saka changes sports as he prepares for England's quarter-final on Saturday

Sterling yet to fix return date

Matt Lawton Doha, **Paul Joyce**

Raheem Sterling was still in the UK last night deliberating over when to return to the World Cup, thus diminishing his chances of playing a part in Saturday's quarter-final against France.

A statement from the Chelsea forward, who left Qatar on Sunday night after reports of a break-in at his Surrey home, is expected on his return at some point today. There is a possibility that he will be back in camp by tomorrow night, with Sterling's representatives asking the FA to look into the logistics of getting him back to Qatar.

However, Sterling will not be present for England training today — and possibly even tomorrow — meaning he would have missed the build-up for the match against the world champions.

Mystery and confusion has surrounded Sterling's situation since Surrey police issued a statement on Monday that contradicted the claims of the player's representative, who said

Continued on page 73

England wait on Rice fitness

Tom Roddy Doha

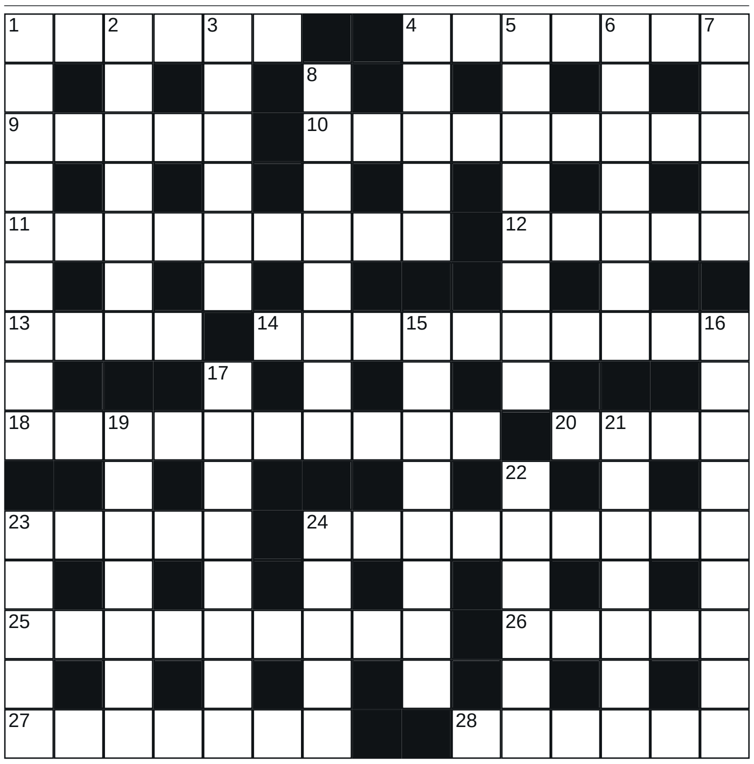
England's doctors are monitoring Declan Rice after he missed yesterday's training session because of illness, with the World Cup quarter-final against France now only two days away.

The England manager, Gareth Southgate, faces an anxious wait to see whether the 23-year-old recovers to take part in training before the game.

Rice has been an integral part of Southgate's team in Qatar as the defensive anchor in midfield alongside Jude Bellingham and Jordan Henderson. The West Ham United player has featured in all but 32 minutes of England's

Continued on page 73

Times Crossword 28,468



ACROSS

1 Huge son going to the end, amusing people (6)
4 Rubbish outside place, last bit of festive decoration (7)
9 Form of life in river covered in flowing liquid? (5)
10 Like a monkey's mistake — a blessing being captured (9)
11 Gangster and cleric outside pub — The Star (9)
12 Give encouragement to holy person leaving diocese (5)
13 Area of ground that's holy, trimmed at the edges (4)
14 Old IT feature fills home-worker with fear (4,6)
18 Begging access, endlessly worrying (10)
20 Old man is full of energy? Exactly! (4)
23 Smallest lake towards where the sun rises (5)
24 Safety device could make car heat up (9)
25 Search all the players before a session (4,5)
26 Look hard, one side to the other, for weeds (5)
27 Decided to add modern light to beastly home (7)
28 Class reportedly got older and wiser? (6)

DOWN

1 Small room close to bodega: see red wine store (9)
2 Tower where star has party, right? (7)
3 Caught he-man in game (6)
4 Bird — investigating having wings being clipped (5)
5 Troubled soul, dear Parisian who cannot stand tall? (8)
6 Be ill, needing nurse round? The very last thing you want (4,3)
7 Number three at sea (5)
8 Lincoln bishop with a set of holy books found to be unorthodox (8)
15 Branch of thieves' organisation tried reforming (8)
16 Garment covered in grass must be put right (9)
17 This person at social function provides food item (8)
19 What's characteristic about conflicting directions in journey? (7)
21 Attendant always round queen, ready first and last (7)
22 Duck in second camp: that is flying off (6)
23 See copper beginning to search place (5)
24 Reminder about being associated with people posh and arrogant (5)

Yesterday's solution 28,467



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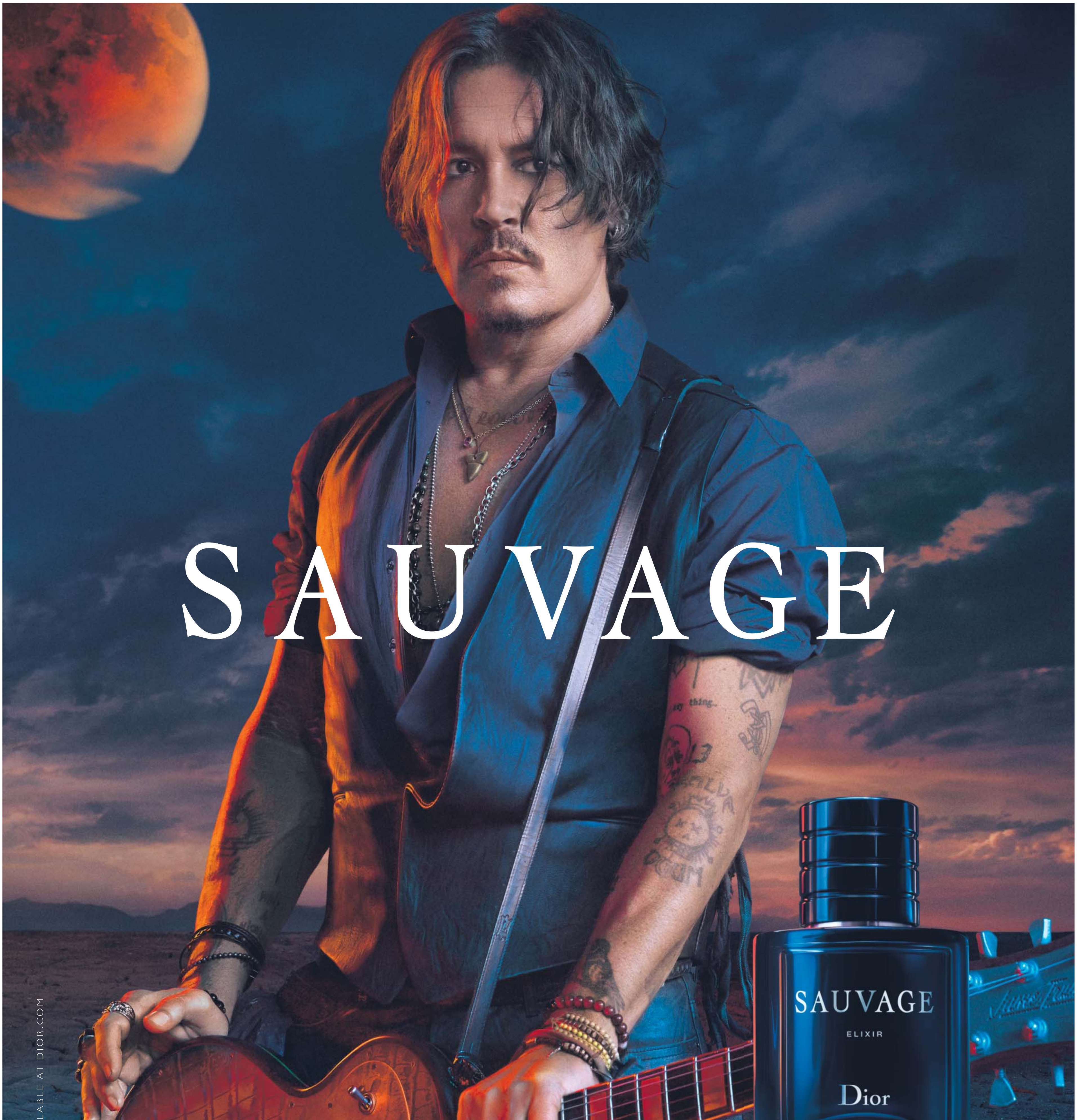
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World Cup Special
THURSDAY DECEMBER 8 2022

PAGES 6-7
David Moyes Do Brazil have the fortitude to match their flair?

PAGE 9
David Walsh Why an ageing Ronaldo cannot cope with being dispensable



Thou shalt not pass

Walker vows to stop Mbappé ruining England's World Cup dream

PAGES 2-3

‘Mbappé won’t stop me – it’s do or die’



Walker has said that he will not roll out the red carpet for Mbappé in their hotly anticipated encounter. The defender also

TOM RODDY
Doha

Even three days before the game, Kyle Walker could not escape Kylian Mbappé. The fleet-footed Frenchman’s presence was already within the England camp as media from across the globe descended on Al Wakrah to pepper the defender with questions on the most highly anticipated match-up of Saturday’s World Cup quarter-final with France.

How does the 32-year-old handle Mbappé? Do England have a plan for the best player in the world? Will past experiences help? And, rather fascinatingly, who is the fastest?

After five minutes, Walker had heard enough. “The game is not England v Mbappé — the game is England v France,” he said firmly.

And yet it is highly likely that the outcome on Saturday will be closely linked with the box-office battle between Walker and Mbappé. Both ooze self-belief and Walker is widely considered one of the few defenders capable of halting the tournament’s top scorer.

“We respect that he’s a good player and in good form but I’m not going to roll out the red carpet for him and tell him to go and score,” the Manchester City player said. “I’m representing my country at a quarter-final of a World Cup. It’s do or die. He’s not going to stand in my way of hopefully winning a World Cup.

“I feel he is a top player. I’m not underestimating that one bit but we are not playing tennis, it’s not a solo sport. They have to worry about us. It’s not just us worrying about them.”

History is on Walker’s side. He has shared the field three times with Mbappé, losing once and winning twice when City met Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League.

“Technically I didn’t play against Mbappé one v one, it was more Neymar,” Walker said. “When we played them in the Champions League for Manchester City you are not just thinking about Mbappé. It’s exactly the same on Saturday.

“I do understand what I need to do and that’s to stop him. It’s probably easier said than done but I don’t underestimate myself. I’ve played him before and I’ve come up against great players before playing with England, Man City and other clubs.”

Gareth Southgate has already stressed to his team that France possess other deadly players, with Olivier Giroud becoming their all-time leading scorer in Qatar.

“[Mbappé is] a tool they have in their armoury that’s very good, but there are other very good players,” Walker said. “So, OK, he’s a great player — that’s why all the questions are about him — but let’s not forget Giroud, who’s scored countless goals for France and in the Premier League. [Ousmane] Dembélé, who, for me, is just as good on the other wing, is a very tricky player. Then you’ve got [Antoine] Griezmann.”

There is one question any spectator at the Al Bayt Stadium will be keen to see answered. Who is faster, Walker or Mbappé? “We’ll hopefully see on Saturday, if I’m chosen,” Walker said. “Who knows?”

Fifa has an answer. The official statistics for the tournament state that Walker is the fastest player in the England squad but his quickest speed is still short of Mbappé.

“You have to use a little bit of nous,” Walker said. “You can’t be a speedboat without a driver. You need to use your brain when needed and I can’t get as tight to him as I would with other players — that’s just the nature of the game. I remember playing against Theo Walcott once and I was getting so close to him and then all of a sudden he gets behind you and that’s your lesson taught.

“You need to make sure the mistakes you make are not costly. He’s going to get the better of you two, three occasions a game. You need to make those occasions as few as possible and not costly.”

Altering England’s formation could provide support. Walker played on the right side of a back three during the run to the 2018 World Cup semi-finals and Euro 2020 final, but has been right back in a four since returning from groin surgery in the third game of the group stage.

All Mbappéd-out, Walker was relieved to be asked about a stray cat he has warmed to and named at the team hotel. “Dave is fine,” Walker said, smiling.

“He had a scrap with another cat the other night. I think they are fighting over territory.”

One of England’s lions is getting ready for his own scrap.



Mbappé is the World Cup’s leading scorer with five goals so far

Maguire: I am good at

HENRY WINTER
Chief Football Writer
Doha



Trust is huge for a person and player like Harry Maguire: trust in the England defenders nearest to him on the field, John Stones to his right and Luke Shaw to his left; trust in the manager Gareth Southgate; and trust in those closest to him, his friends and family.

Trust is vital for Maguire, whose world is one of intense scrutiny, where he says “every pass I make is analysed”, especially in a torrid year for him personally at Manchester United. He needs to know who he can trust, who’s got his back. This is probably why Maguire has proved so adept at masking the untrustworthy in the players’ wildly popular card game of Wolf at their Al-Wakrah hotel.

“I’m quite good at psychology,” Maguire says, laughing. “I’ve needed to be over the last year or so. I analyse quite a lot. At Leicester, we played the game a lot and the more you play the game the more you see. You get to look at what people are doing, how they’re acting.”

When it is put to Maguire that an aptitude for Wolf is really useful given the world he lives in, he says: “Of course. Especially being in my position, it’s really important to know who you can trust.”

Southgate has been vital, backing Maguire even when he was out in the cold at United, even when there was a clamour for his exclusion from the World Cup squad.

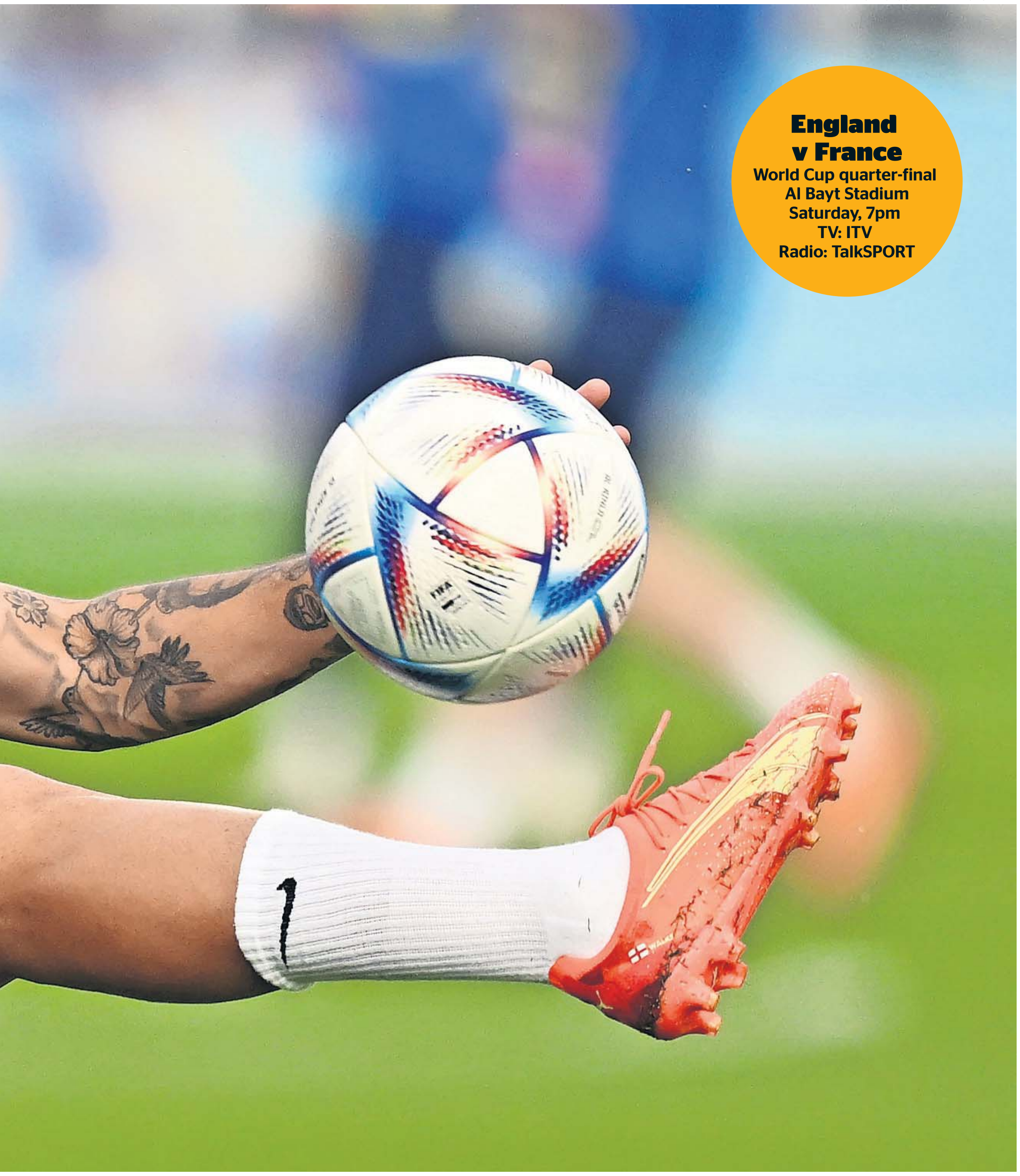
“He’s been brilliant with me, ever since he gave me my debut, the trust he has shown in me. Pretty much every game I’ve been available for I’ve played for him,” Maguire says. “He’s given me great confidence to go out and express myself and play to my attributes. He really makes me feel I’m valued in this team. The belief he gives me makes me want to never let him down.” The trust runs both ways.

“When there’s a squad decided or team picked for England, there are always players who ‘shouldn’t be playing’. That’s why Gareth has such a hard job, because we have a lot of talent who could play.” Maguire cuts out what he calls “the noise”, focusing on his game, reminding himself of past excellence, and heeding the advice only of those he trusts.

“I listen to people around me like my family and friends, my team-mates, the staff here,” Maguire adds. “I feel how much value my team-mates and staff believe I bring to the team. That gives me great confidence. I go back to my memories, my past performances for my country in big tournaments. I’m 29 years old, the captain of Manchester United, I’ve played 52 times for my country, and if I look back on my career and put everything into perspective, I’m doing everything I always wanted to do. The next stage of my career, I want to start winning trophies.

“The last year has been difficult, and I haven’t played as well as I’ve done in the previous five years at the top level, but during a career there’s only probably Cristiano [Ronaldo] and Lionel Messi who’ve not had a dip. It’s a 15-year career if you’re lucky, and there’s no way as a defender, especially with all the scrutiny that’s on defenders nowadays, you’re not going to have dips. It’s how you bounce back from them.”

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER MARC ASPLAND



pointed out that he has faced him three times for City, with his side winning two of those games versus Paris Saint-Germain

psychology. I have to be

Maguire feels that there's more scrutiny with United, possibly because he's not played well there this year. "There's pressure playing in a World Cup with England," he says. "At Manchester United I'm under a lot more scrutiny. Every pass I make gets analysed. Every goal we concede is a defender's fault. Last year at United wasn't good enough. Everyone in the team didn't play well enough and we came under a lot of scrutiny. No one came out with plaudits. This season has been a lot better."

Struggling to get into the United side, Maguire was relieved that Southgate kept supporting him. He noted headlines about an apparent "meeting" with Southgate in the Wembley tunnel on September 26 after the draw with Germany. It was more a brief chat. "He might have said a couple of words about being strong and 'make sure you're ready', but it was literally 20 seconds of saying, 'Bye, see you soon.'"

He had the trust of the manager, and soon came confirmation of the trust of the England travelling fans, the most loyal ones who sang his name in the opening game with Iran. "I felt it in the warm-up," Maguire recalls. "England fans have been great with me ever since I made my debut against Lithuania five years ago. They've always sung my name, giving me great belief to play well for my country. And I've repaid them with lots of good memories over the journey I've been on myself. I'm a fan of England myself. Playing for my country means everything to me. It's a huge honour every time I put on the shirt. The fans see that.

"I'm just super proud every time I sing that anthem. It's one of the proudest moments of my life. You are focused, nervous and excited. You've butterflies but I'll be ready to go.

"It's a huge game. A quarter-final against France, the world champions, some people say maybe the favourites to win the competition. But these are the games we play for. These are the games growing up that you want to be involved in. They are huge pressure games but this is the pressure you want. This is where we need to deliver. I feel good mentally, I feel good physically, I feel fresh."

In that quarter-final Maguire and company face Kylian Mbappé. France's No 10 attacks in from the left, and will initially be Kyle Walker's responsibility, but Maguire knows the threat coming his way. "Mbappé's a wonderful player, had an amazing tournament, he's one of the best in the world but they also have so many different talents. [Olivier] Giroud is a top goalscorer, [Ousmane] Dembélé is playing really well on the other wing, and you've got [Antoine] Griezmann too.

"But we have good defenders. A lot of the English defenders get a lot of scrutiny but we come into these big tournaments and our defensive record is always good. Three clean sheets on the bounce, so we have got to take great belief in what we have done as a defence, as a unit, as a midfield in front of us, and the work rate that the lads are pressing the ball up the top end of the pitch as well. And Jordan [Pickford] behind us has been magnificent in these tournaments.

"It is about the mentality and belief to really, really go into the game and think we're going into it to win.

"I played in 2018 and we got to the semi-final and a lot of the lads were happy. Now there's a belief that we've got to win this tournament." Maguire trusts in himself, in his team-mates and in his manager to deliver.

Southgate's midfield blend makes up for lack of creative pivot

Winning the ball back quickly and authority of Jordan Henderson has given England balance, writes **Paul Joyce**

The sense of envy was evident as the names tripped off Gareth Southgate's tongue. In the countdown to the 2018 World Cup, the England manager listed the midfielders Paul Pogba, N'Golo Kanté and Blaise Matuidi as the gold standard and a reason why France would be so strong.

Nothing that transpired during the tournament challenged that intuition as France went on to lift the prize. Yet before Saturday's World Cup quarter-final with the French, the composition of England's engine room is far less likely to prompt a pang of jealousy as in the past, and nor does the area feel like a weakness at present.

On the contrary, as Southgate looks to lead the country to back-to-back World Cup semi-finals, his midfield is a strength. In the Al Bayt stadium, he must hope it stays that way.

To arrive at the point where he is comfortable with his hand, the evolution of England's midfield has been something of a tortuous process. Look back to the start of Southgate's reign in late 2016, when he was still an interim, and Wayne Rooney was continuing in the deep-lying midfielder role that he had bagged for himself a few months earlier at the European Championship.

Rooney was soon phased out and Jack Wilshere overlooked because he was not playing for Arsenal, yet there was something clearly nagging at Southgate before the finals in 2018 given his comments in extolling the options available to France. England's own run in Russia had been largely based on solid foundations of a back three and set-piece prowess.

When their hopes ran aground against Croatia in the semi-final, it was essentially due to Luka Modric, the Ballon d'Or-winning midfielder, taking control of proceedings. The question of why England did not possess a player like Modric was posed immediately afterwards and has been a recurring theme since.

The loss against Holland in the Nations League semi-final the next year prompted hand-wringing over where was our Frenkie de Jong? The defeat by Italy in the final of the Euro 2020 brought focus on the ability of Marco Verratti and Jorginho to set the tempo and dictate.

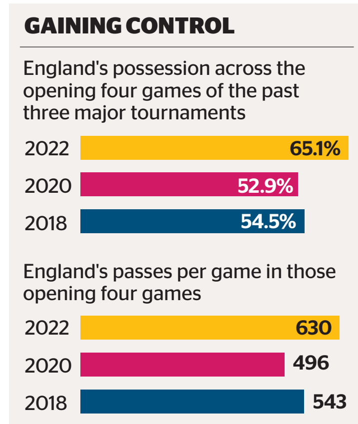
Southgate and his assistant, Steve Holland, did try to uncover England's own playmaker. Harry Winks was viewed at one stage as the answer to the conundrum. Dele Alli, Jesse Lingard and Ruben Loftus-Cheek — who were prominent in Russia — have all succumbed to the vagaries of fitness and form. In some cases, both.

The culture of English football — the desire to score, win back the ball and perform with intensity — means that a Modric-style player is less likely to be developed and the situation prompted Southgate to veer down a different route.

"In terms of the profile of players, we cannot buy somebody, we cannot generate somebody — we have got to make the most of the players that we have," the manager has said. "We try to find different ways of building from the back to allow us to make up for that lack of a playmaking pivot. We don't have that sort of player. We have players with other excellent attributes and we try to get the most out of that."

Declan Rice was lured from Ireland and has become such a cornerstone that England will hope his illness clears quickly, while Southgate looked to the Championship to scout Kalvin Phillips, who was excelling for Leeds United. Together they formed the partnership that helped to guide the country to the final of Euro 2020 last summer, albeit one that was rooted in solidity, a more defensive-minded approach that was sometimes complemented by a back three.

Since the defeat by Italy there have been further developments. There was the failed experiment of shoehorning Trent Alexander-Arnold into a No 8 midfield role against Andorra in September 2021, the rise of Jude Bellingham, the injury to Phillips that cast doubt on his inclusion and the renaissance of a fully fit Jordan Henderson.



The introduction of Henderson, the Liverpool captain, shortly after the hour-mark of the goalless draw with the USA has proved a turning point. England lacked authority in that match, but the 32-year-old has allowed them to hold sway since. Only Spain (135) have had more sequences of ten or more passes than England (83) in the tournament.

The caveat in all of this is that Southgate's side have not faced a team that would be expected to keep the ball for long periods. Despite injuries, France still boast Aurélien Tchouaméni, whom Liverpool wanted to sign last summer before he went to Real Madrid for £69 million, and Juventus's Adrien Rabiot. The amount of possession France are enjoying is also up markedly on when they ruled the world. Four years ago the average was 48.6 per cent; now it is 57.9 per cent. They are also facing fewer shots per game than England (7.8 compared with 8.8) and having more shots a game than Southgate's side (17.5 compared with 11.8).

"Given our strengths, we're calm and we hope we can do a great job to achieve this win," Tchouaméni said. "We're not afraid of anyone. We'll try and show our quality and if we're all at our best, there will be no problem to win this match."

England will believe otherwise.

How England handled the



As Gareth Southgate seeks to shackle Kylian Mbappé, **Matt Dickinson** recounts past encounters with all-time greats

How do you cope with facing the best player on the planet? That question hangs over England in the shape of the electrifying Kylian Mbappé — but it is not the first time that the national team have faced such a daunting challenge at the World Cup.

To stick to the usual game plan? To man-mark? The Times looked at seven previous occasions when England have faced outstanding performers — superstars, Ballon d'Or winners, phenomenons — on the biggest stage to see if Gareth Southgate should be preoccupied with one world-class opponent.

Eusébio — 1966
England 2 Portugal 1
World Cup semi-final

Legend has it that in the dressing room, Alf Ramsey turned to Nobby Stiles and reminded the midfield enforcer that his mission was to take Eusébio out of the game. "Do you mean just this game, Alf? Or for life?" Stiles reputedly replied.

There was good reason to fear the Portugal forward. In the previous match, he had scored four times to lead his team back from catastrophe against North Korea to win 5-3. In his prime, and with Pelé injured, the then holder of the Ballon d'Or was as fearsome as any attacker.

Stiles sat at the base of midfield, Claude Makélélé-like, and it was his role to confront a roaming forward who floated behind a big striker, José Torres. Stiles performed his job brilliantly in what was regarded as his best performance for his country.

Eusébio had talked before the game of Stiles being "allowed to get away with too many things during the World Cup" but it was a marking display notable for its control. Even on a night when Bobby Charlton scored two superb goals, England's match-winner lauded Stiles's application.

"He shepherded Eusébio quite brilliantly, refusing to lunge in but always jockeying him out of easy space of opportunities to strike. He kept safe all our ambition and the hopes of all his countrymen," Charlton noted in *1966: My World Cup Story*.

Eusébio scored a late penalty but victory went to England and the baton would pass to Charlton — Ballon d'Or winner in 1966, with Eusébio second — as the Portuguese left the pitch in tears.
Stop factor: 4 out of 5

Pelé — 1970
England 0 Brazil 1
World Cup group stage

One beautiful aspect of the iconic image of Bobby Moore swapping shirts with Pelé after an epic contest in Guadalajara was that you could not tell who had won the contest. But it was Brazil and Pelé, the world's supreme footballer, who had the last word.

Pelé did not score but it took one of the most renowned saves in history, from Gordon Banks diving low and almost scooping the ball out of the net, to stop him. It took Moore to play arguably the greatest defensive game of his life to keep the scoreline so close.

Moore was doubling up on Jairzinho one minute and, the next, stopping Pelé and Tostão coming through the middle. He was pulling off one of the most famous tackles in history, remembered in song by Baddiel and Skinner. But it was still not enough.

In one moment approaching the hour-mark, Pelé took down a flicked pass from Tostão, drew several defenders, including Moore, and slipped the ball nonchalantly to Jairzinho to hammer home. "A game for adults," according to Mário Zagallo, the Brazil coach, had been decided by one deft moment and one thunderous shot.

Moore recounted that, in the post-match exchange, he told Pelé: "See you in the final," and that the maestro responded: "Yes, I think we will." But that was not to happen as England were undone by another of the most notable players of the era.
Stop factor: 2 out of 5

Gerd Müller — 1970
England 2 West Germany 3
World Cup quarter-final

"Moore constantly winning in these battles with Gerd Müller," Hugh Johns said on ITV as the redoubtable England captain cleared the ball away in extra time with the score at 2-2. It was a fatal whiff of English presumption, and not for the first time on a baking afternoon in Leon.

Less than 15 seconds later, the ball would be in England's net and no one should have been surprised that it was Müller, "Der Bomber", who scored the devastating goal that knocked the world champions out of the 1970 tournament and condemned England to years in the wilderness.

Müller had already scored two hat-tricks in the group stage, an astonishing seven goals in three matches. Even though, as Johns said, England had managed to keep him at bay for much of a stiflingly hot quarter-final, there was no more prolific poacher of penalty-box goals at the time.

The West German was delighted to recall England's complacency after taking a 2-0 lead. "It was 110 degrees and England thought they had already won it," Müller reflected. "They took off Bobby Charlton. They wanted to save him for the next game. What a present!"

As England tired in the heat, Jürgen Grabowski beat Terry Cooper and sent in a deep cross that was headed back across the goal, where Müller pounced, contorting his body horizontally to volley the ball past Peter Bonetti in an image that would haunt English football for years.

Müller would go on to score ten goals in the tournament — a tally no one has come close to overtaking in any World Cup since — to claim the 1970 Ballon d'Or (open to players in Europe before it combined with the Fifa award). His international record was a 68 goals in 62 caps.
Stop factor: 1 out of 5

Diego Maradona — 1986
England 1 Argentina 2
World Cup quarter-final



Talking to Bobby Robson many years later about one of the most celebrated contests ever staged at a World Cup finals, he said that he had pondered whether England should have man-marked Diego Maradona. Chances are that nothing would have stopped a footballer carrying an almost demonic determination to come out on top.

Robson wanted the nearest man to close down Maradona and if that responsibility appeared to have fallen on Peter Reid when the Argentina captain picked up the ball in midfield and set off towards England's goal, it was the most thankless task in football.

Reid has been asked a thousand times why he did not just hack down Maradona as the maestro began the game's famous dribble but he was not to know that one of the greatest goals in history was unfolding — not until it was too late.

"I get asked, 'Why didn't you bring him down?' and rest assured if I could have got there…I wake up in a cold sweat still thinking about it, and I still can't get there," Reid recalled.

In scoring two of the most famous goals in football history, Maradona was as close to unstoppable as any footballer has ever been. As Reid later explained of the decision not to nominate one man to pick up the Argentina captain: "Belgium tried it in the semi-final with Eric Gerets, who was a great player, and he still tore them apart."
Stop factor: 0 out of 5

Lothar Matthäus — 1990
England 1 West Germany 1 (3-4 on penalties)
World Cup semi-final

There were more flamboyant players on the world stage than Lothar Matthäus — England had one of them in Paul Gascoigne — but perhaps none more indomitable than the West Germany captain who lifted the 1990 World Cup as an embodiment of the power and certainty of German football.

England matched West Germany for long periods but there was something about the winner of the 1990 Ballon d'Or that proved indestructible. He seemed to be everywhere, driving on his team even as Robson's side put them under pressure.

It feels all too typical that when it came to the penalties, Matthäus struck his with almost comic force; taking a long straight sprint at the ball before belting it as hard as he could past Peter Shilton. No stuttering run for him.

Matthäus was never going to be popular in England but it is worth remembering that when Chris Waddle hit the decisive penalty over the crossbar, it was the German captain who was the first person to console him.
Stop factor: 3 out of 5

game's greatest

WITTERS/PA; MIRRORPIX/GETTY IMAGES; KEYSTONE-FRANCE/GETTY IMAGES







Reid still wakes up in a cold sweat over his inability to stop Maradona scoring one of the World Cup's most celebrated goals in 1986. Moore, top right, had greater success in keeping Pelé quiet in 1970 before the iconic moment of the pair exchanging shirts. Above, the performance of Stiles, the England No 4, in subduing the great Eusébio in 1966 would take its place in English football folklore

Ronaldo — 2002
England 1 Brazil 2
World Cup quarter-final

The good news is that only one team at the 2002 World Cup — England — stopped Ronaldo from scoring in a tournament when he won the Golden Boot with eight goals including two in victory in the final.

The bad news, as Danny Mills remembers, is that it was not just a matter of fending off Ronaldo or even Rivaldo and Ronaldinho but, in Cafu and Roberto Carlos, full backs who played like wingers in a Brazil side of thrilling adventure.

Ronaldo was the superstar, the phenomenon, even if he had already had two major knee operations. England did a relatively good job of keeping him quiet thanks to Sol Campbell and Rio Ferdinand, arguably the best defensive partnership in the tournament.

But attacks could come from anywhere and it was Ronaldinho and Rivaldo who excelled, the former brilliantly setting up the latter to equalise Michael Owen's goal, and then hitting the winner with a lucky free kick. "There is no way he meant it," Mills says. "You could tell that from the way his team-mates reacted on the pitch at the time."

Ronaldo had been subdued by his own extraordinary standards, a mere six out of ten in the ratings. England had put out one fire only to find others ablaze.

Stop factor: 3 out of 5

Cristiano Ronaldo — 2006
England 0 Portugal 0 (1-3 on penalties)
World Cup quarter-final

While not quite at his peak — it would take another 12 months for Cristiano Ronaldo to feature on the Ballon d'Or list and a year after that to win it — he was hurtling towards greatness by the time that he appeared in his first World Cup.

Ashley Cole had done a superb job in their personal duel at Euro 2004. This time Ronaldo, 21, was stationed on England's right flank, facing his club team-mate Gary Neville.

Ronaldo was largely kept under control though still managed to have a key influence; infamously falling out with the England fans for his part in winding up Wayne Rooney, before and straight after the striker's dismissal. When the game went to penalties, it was Ronaldo who stepped up and coolly scored the winning spot kick in the shoot-out.

Neville would later say that he felt this tournament, and coming through the abuse back in England, was when Ronaldo became a more mature person and footballer. A World Cup had helped to shape his ascent to greatness. Will we be saying the same of Mbappé on Saturday night?

Stop factor: 3 out of 5

Rabiot: I want to play in Premier League – it would suit my game

JAMES GHEERBRANT
Doha

If, at the end of the last World Cup, you had tried to predict France's starting XI in 2022, you would probably have named Hugo Lloris, Raphaël Varane, Antoine Griezmann, Kylian Mbappé and Ousmane Dembélé. If someone had tipped you off to the presence of a surprisingly durable veteran, you might have guessed Olivier Giroud. And if you were particularly prescient, you might even have tipped Jules Koundé, then at Bordeaux, and Dayot Upamecano, then at RB Leipzig, to break through and establish themselves in the defence. But you could scarcely have imagined that Adrien Rabiot, four years thence, would be a key player in Didier Deschamps' midfield.

At that stage, Rabiot seemed to have not so much burnt his bridges with the France manager as mined them with TNT and pushed the plunger. His decision to refuse to be named on Deschamps' standby list for the 2018 tournament in Russia sent him, unsurprisingly, into international exile. But against the odds, Rabiot is back in favour and almost certain to start against England on Saturday.

"There were maybe two years where we didn't have any contact at all," Rabiot said yesterday of his relationship with Deschamps. "Then I came back in 2020 [for the Nations League games in September that year] and we immediately talked things through. I didn't know what to expect at the beginning but we've had a great relationship ever since. Now we know each other better, we understand each other better and these days we're a lot closer."

Deschamps is a stickler for discipline and morale. But he is also a pragmatist. As the example of Karim Benzema has also shown, if he believes a player will improve the team, he is prepared to show a little latitude. And that's what Rabiot's recall comes down to. Blaise Matuidi's international career ended in 2019, and Deschamps has not consistently been able to count on the fitness of Paul Pogba and N'Golo Kanté. Managers as diverse as Unai Emery, Maurizio Sarri and Massimiliano Allegri have been convinced of Rabiot's ability to improve the team, and now Deschamps is too.

As a player, Rabiot is something of a paradox. He is tall and elegant. His nickname, *Le Duc* (The Duke), suggests a player of real class and refinement. He has the face of a cherub and the flowing locks of a playmaking prima donna. But really, Rabiot is an energetic, physical midfield scrapper. He sprints, springs and presses. In this tournament, only Uruguay's Mathías Olivera and Germany's David Raum have blocked more passes, and only one midfielder, the Mexican beanpole Edson Álvarez, has won more aerial duels.

Although he hasn't directly replaced Matuidi — Mbappé now has his position on the left of the front three, with Dembélé on the other flank — it's perhaps Rabiot who comes closest to replicating what Matuidi offered.

He can get forward and attack the box, as he did when scoring against Australia, but he also has a crucial role in balancing this team.

"I'm going through a very good period football-wise, the best of my career," Rabiot said. "I've worked a lot on my fitness, which has allowed me to be active for 90 minutes, to not let the rhythm drop. From the moment I stopped asking myself so many questions, I've felt much better on the pitch. Being free on the pitch and in my head allows to express myself and help the team best."

He is a player who has always fascinated and polarised. When he was 12, his father, Michel, suffered a stroke that left him with locked-in syndrome. "Ever since his accident, I've fought for him on the pitch," he once told Le Parisien. That led his mother, Véronique, to take a more proactive role in his career. As Rabiot has admitted, she plays a key role in negotiating his contracts — and she can be a very tough customer. After last summer's Euros, she had a spat with Mbappé's father as France were eliminated by Switzerland, with Mbappé missing in the shoot-out.

When Rabiot was 13, he spent a few months in the academy of Manchester City. "It was a very good experience, even if it didn't last a year," he said. "I really liked the atmosphere around football in England. It's something quite different from France or even Italy. I've always said I'd like to play in England one day. It's the level of the league which attracts me, the way of playing, which I think is well suited to my qualities."

And indeed there is a little bit of the British bulldog about Rabiot, whose contract at Juventus ends next summer. According to FBRef's player comparison tool, the two players his statistical profile most closely resembles are Jacob Ramsey and Scott McTominay. Of all the players that England will come up against on Saturday, the man who looks like a French film star is perhaps the one most moulded in their own image. Now he faces his biggest test, against Declan Rice, Jude Bellingham and Jordan Henderson. France's hopes in the midfield battle depend, in part, on the man who came in from the cold.

FRANCE'S AVERAGE TOUCHES V POLAND

Adrien Rabiot played on the left of a defensive midfield two and offered protection so Mbappe could stay high upfield



DAVID MOYES

I love Brazil's flair but will their three rocks cope with better sides?



Well, here we are, down to the last eight and at the point where the dynamics change for every team. The group stage and, to a certain extent, the second round are all about just getting through but now it is three games to win the tournament, make-or-break time. The stakes and the pressure are huge.

In cup competitions it is not always the best team that wins. Sometimes luck of the draw, refereeing decisions or the rub of the green plays its part. This World Cup is still hard to call – but here is how I see the sides in the last eight.

CROATIA v BRAZIL
TOMORROW 3PM. BBC1 (FROM 2.30PM)

CROATIA

They have only won one game – versus Canada – and their other matches ended in draws. It took a penalty shoot out to get them through against Japan and, of all the sides left in the World Cup, they are the ones I fear for the most.

They have never had quite the same goal threat since Mario Mandzukic retired and, at 37, this is surely Luka Modric's last World Cup. They have begun a process of transitioning to a younger generation and need to find more talents with the quality of the outstanding Josko Gvardiol.

That said, they are a group with great mentality, who have become used to reaching the later stages of tournaments. For a country of Croatia's size to make a World Cup final and get to the last eight next time round is an extraordinary achievement. And, as I said, this is cup football. If you're the underdogs it might be: can you hang in, can you take it to penalties? Croatia, whose last four World Cup knockout victories have come in extra time or via shoot-outs, have great experience of scrapping their way through.

I picked out Gvardiol, 20, as one of the talents to watch at this tournament and he really is going to be a super player. He was Croatia's left back at Euro 2020 but is probably going to play most of his career at left centre back, where we're seeing him here. He came through the Red Bull system and they excel at picking out new talents from eastern Europe. I'll be amazed if he doesn't come to the Premier League in the next couple of years.

BRAZIL

Watching them beat South Korea, I loved the flair, the attacking play and especially loved Lucas Paquetá's goal, but I look at Brazil and think they could be anything at any time. They can reach levels of performance that are probably better than any other team's, yet flaws mean they won't always be the best side.

I see looseness in them, periods in the game when they say "maybe we only need to defend with five or six players here". They have such riches in the forward areas, players with flair, attacking intent and remarkable speed, like Vinícius Junior, Richarlison, Raphinha and Neymar, but my question is: if they get put under severe defensive pressure, will they be able to see it through?

There is a burden on Casemiro and their two centre backs. Casemiro does an incredible job and Thiago Silva and Marquinhos are great defenders: great readers of the game; great competitors, and; wonderful on the ball. But everyone else has an instinct to attack. So are those three great defensive players going to be enough?

If Brazil play England, or France, or Portugal they will have moments where they have to defend and suffer. It might be that they have to tweak their approach.

They have the manager to do it – Tite is a top coach, with great experience – and perhaps he will bring in Fred and other more defensively minded players to give them more solidity in the difficult games. They have an incredible spirit in their squad and that can also help them when it gets tough.



Brazil have flair but will have defending to do as they go deeper into the tournament

HOLLAND V ARGENTINA
TOMORROW 7PM. BBC 1 (FROM 6.30PM)

HOLLAND

This is a fixture that makes my generation say "wow". We think of the 1978 World Cup final and the incredible Dutch 1970s team. That was the "total football" era and Holland are playing a very different way now, but I only have respect for the way Louis Van Gaal has adapted his style to fit the players he has available.

Van Gaal was once very much a Dutch 4-3-3 coach but he has asked himself: have I got the personnel capable of playing that formation? The answer is no, because this is not a vintage Holland squad. He has shown strength of character to go for a system that many in his own country perceive as "pragmatic" and going against tradition but the most important thing for any manager is to say, "how do I find a way to win?" Sometimes the answer doesn't please everyone.

Van Gaal's 3-4-1-2 enables him to use Memphis Depay and Cody Gakpo as a front two and sometimes he tweaks things so Gakpo can play as a No10. It has been working for him. However, Argentina are a far different test to playing Qatar, Senegal, Ecuador and the USA.

ARGENTINA

They have not impressed me as much as the other top sides – except for the joy of watching Lionel Messi. Their other players are decent but not incredible. The fact they have a chance is simply down to him.

I came up against Messi when he was at Barcelona and I managed Real Sociedad. He's got an aura around him and sees things quicker than anyone else on the pitch. I think he has got even better with age.

There is an incredible respect for Messi from nearly every manager and every other football player and it is because of the way he has conducted himself throughout his career. He has never been a player who feigns injury. You see him being tackled and don't see him having three or four belly flops before he goes down. When you think how many people try and kick him, that attitude is really refreshing and part of why he is in the hearts of people who genuinely love the game.

He's 35 and all players have to adapt as they get older, are no longer as quick, can't cover the same distances and lose a bit of strength. They have to read the game more, run less, and try to make their moments matter. Messi has certainly made his moments matter in this tournament.

Watching him now is like getting to see the best band on the planet: you worry that you might not get to see them again so you appreciate them even more. You think of those pictures of him as the 13, 14-year-old boy wonder and think of all the stars who come through but can't maintain it because they can't dedicate themselves to the sport.

Messi, in contrast, has had almost 20 years of incredible performances, of evolving and always conducting himself the right way. Football is in awe of him.

MOROCCO V PORTUGAL
SATURDAY 3PM. ITV (FROM 2PM)

MOROCCO

In the history of World Cups, teams from the continent where the finals are being held tend to do well – so the fact that this tournament is being held outside Europe and South America was perhaps always going to offer a little more opportunity to countries from other parts of the world. It is fantastic that Morocco are still there, representing Africa and also drawing huge support from Arab countries. They fully deserve their place in the last eight.

They have the best defensive record in the tournament and base themselves on organisation, being well drilled and able to cope with not having as much of the ball as the opposition. The drawback with playing that way is that if you go behind you suddenly have to change — and Morocco haven't been behind yet. The question with Spain was always whether they were strong enough up front to score goals whereas Portugal, with all their attacking talent, are a different proposition.

They have an outstanding right back in Achraf Hakimi and I've been impressed with the energy, attitude and quality of their holding midfielder, Sofyan Amrabat. They have two left-footed centre backs, which you don't see too often and Nayef Aguerd is a rarity in being a left footer who plays on the right side of defence.

But he and Romain Saïss have been fantastic. Aguerd is very good footballer, a stylish centre half, and it was a real blow for West Ham when he got injured in a pre-season friendly against Rangers. We missed him and I was pleased he was finally able to make his Premier League debut in our last game. Though Morocco might find keeping another clean sheet tough, given the step up in level, there is more to them than just defending – in Youssef En-Nesyri they have a centre forward who is an incredible good runner and gives them an outlet.

Backing him up is Hakim Ziyech – so when they counterattack, they have good enough players to be a threat.

PORTUGAL

Part of being a good coach is being

ANNEGRET HILSE/REUTERS



THE TOURNAMENT SO FAR

Prolific finishing

England have the best goals to shot ratio out of teams left at World Cup 2022

	Goals	Shots	Goals per shot
England	12	47	0.26
Portugal	12	52	0.23
Netherlands	8	36	0.22
Morocco	4	30	0.13
France	9	70	0.13
Argentina	7	55	0.13
Croatia	5	46	0.11
Brazil	7	74	0.09

Passing game

Completed passes at World Cup 2022 for nations left in the competition

Argentina	2,479
England	2,312
France	2,207
Croatia	2,141
Brazil	2,112
Portugal	2,026
Netherlands	1,900
Morocco	1,137

Playing dirty

Morocco have committed the most fouls out of nations still left in the tournament

	Fouls	Fouls per game
Morocco	59	14.8
Netherlands	57	14.3
Croatia	47	11.8
Portugal	46	11.5
England	43	10.8
Argentina	41	10.3
Brazil	39	9.8
France	25	6.3

Standing out

Players with the most tackles and interceptions out of nations still left in the World Cup so far

Number of tackles

Achraf Hakimi (Morocco)	17
Ibrahima Konaté (France)	13
Noussair Mazraoui (Morocco)	13
Frenkie de Jong (Netherlands)	12
Jude Bellingham (England)	11

Number of interceptions

Aurélien Tchouaméni (France)	8
Declan Rice (England)	8
Luka Modrić (Croatia)	7
Jurriën Timber (Netherlands)	7
Denzel Dumfries (Netherlands)	7

Source: Opta via FBRef



Hakimi, the Morocco right back, has had an outstanding tournament so far

able to make big decisions and Fernando Santos made a huge call in dropping Cristiano Ronaldo for the 6-1 victory over Switzerland. Decisions can go wrong and Santos would have had the whole world saying, "how could you leave the top goalscorer in the world out?" had he lost to the Swiss. He showed huge courage — and got it right.

I sat next to Benfica's coach, Roger Schmidt, at a Uefa coaches forum a few weeks ago. He told me how good Gonçalo Ramos is so it wasn't entirely a surprise to see Ramos scoring a brilliant hat-trick after coming in for Ronaldo.

When you look at the strength of Portuguese club football — Benfica and Porto both topped difficult Champions League groups — and consider that Portugal have won the Euros and the Nations League, their progress at this World Cup should not be a surprise. They have so many outstanding established players — Ronaldo, Bernardo Silva, Bruno Fernandes, João Felix, William Carvalho, Rúben Dias, Rúben Neves — and a young generation, like Ramos, Diogo Costa and Rafael Leão, coming through. I'll be amazed if Santos doesn't turn to Ronaldo again at some point, even if as an impact substitute at a key moment.

I think Ronaldo could still easily play a big part in the tournament because of his ability to score goals and there isn't one team left in it who wouldn't want him to be part of their squad because of the match-winning capabilities he brings. Who knows? Maybe it is written in the stars that Ronaldo's biggest World Cup moment is yet to come.

ENGLAND V FRANCE

SATURDAY 7PM. ITV (FROM 6PM)

ENGLAND

England look like a real tournament team these days. They play with assurance and knowledge of how to get to the latter stages of finals. Their front six encapsulates their strength in depth.

Middle to front England have options as good, if not better than, anyone. Whether Jack Grealish starts instead of Phil Foden, or Raheem Sterling starts instead of Bukayo Saka, or Marcus Rashford plays they remain very strong. In that respect they're like a top club side where you can put one player in and take another one out and it doesn't make a difference to the result on the day.

It's good news that Harry Kane is playing so well and has started scoring, because England's chances of winning the tournament were always going to depend on Kane playing well. However, it's also great that England have spread the goal scoring around a number of players.

They have kept clean sheets in three of their four games but it will be much harder against France. England conceded two against Iran and have given up big chances in other games and if they give France chances, France will score – indeed, to win this quarter-final I suspect England will have to score more than once. Declan Rice and Gareth Southgate's defence will have to work hard and be on their games against Kylian Mbappé and Antoine Griezmann and co.

FRANCE

France have tournament-winning experience, great reserves of talent to pick from and seem a happy and settled camp – which wasn't always the case before Didier Deschamps took over.

Mbappé is probably the "new best player in the world" in the making and sometimes when you have a super-talent it's a challenge to make sure they fit into the team and work for others but not with him, which is testament not just to Mbappé but also Deschamps – a top, experienced manager.

France have a settled way of playing. They invite you on then counterattack with their incredible pace and quality on the flanks. In an era where we don't see as much width or as many brilliant wingers as there once were in the game, maybe the French are bringing wide play back.

Yet Mbappé and Ousmane Dembélé are just as capable of coming inside and threatening the goal as they are going down the line.

Speed has always been important in football and in the modern game is a greater weapon than ever, and those two have pace to burn.

They will be a huge challenge for Kyle Walker and Luke Shaw (or Kieran Trippier, if he plays) to control but watch Griezmann too. He is having a marvellous World Cup and he is also incredibly quick. Maybe people don't associate him with speed but seeing him up close in La Liga, I got to appreciate how fast he plays the game.

Five weeks, 48 sides for 2026 - Fifa set to infuriate top flight

MARTYN ZIEGLER
CHIEF SPORTS REPORTER

The 2026 World Cup is set to last at least five weeks instead of four to accommodate an expanded tournament in a move that is expected to anger European clubs and leagues.

The tournament in the United States, Canada and Mexico will have 48 countries instead of 32, but Fifa is reviewing its plan of having 16 groups of three teams in the first phase, with two from each qualifying. Sources say that having 12 groups of four teams is now the favoured format among Fifa's leaders — especially given that more matches mean more money from TV rights.

That would mean 104 matches compared with 64 at the World Cup in Qatar, and experts say that would take at least 35 days to fit in compared with 29 days for this tournament and 32 for Russia 2018. There has been growing concern about three-team groups because the last match day would not involve one of the teams, raising the risk of the other two contriving a result to suit them both.

The collusion between West Germany and Austria in 1982, which resulted in them both qualifying at the expense of Algeria — who had already played their final group match — prompted Fifa to change the rules so that the final group games kicked off at the same time.

Arsène Wenger, Fifa's head of global football development, has said the decision on group sizes will be taken next year, while Victor Montagliani, the chairman of the 2026 World Cup and Concacaf president, has said the collusion risk is "a valid concern" and that organisers could accommodate "35 or so days".

Alex Phillips, for four years the head of Asia-Europe affairs at Uefa and now an independent Fifa consultant, believes that the difficulties over using a group of three are too great and expects an expanded event.

Even 16 groups of three would mean 80 matches, but 12 groups of four would mean 104 —with the top two in each group plus the eight best third-placed teams going into a knockout round of 32.

Phillips said: "Everyone agrees that a 48-team World Cup makes the tournament worse as a competition — the quality gets lower and it is messier. But do any positives outweigh the negatives? That is the question.

"We have just had the best final round of group games in a World Cup, at least in my living memory, so you can see why there is a lot of support to remain with groups of four.

"The issue with groups of three is one team is not playing on the final match day and for the two teams that do play there is a risk of collusion — 1982 is burnt into everybody's heads with what happened between West Germany and Austria.

"The other big factor is that there are only two matches, so if a team has a stroke of bad luck they could be on the way home after only a few days."

It would mean the finalists playing eight matches instead of seven, and Phillips expects hostility from clubs, players' unions and leagues, with concern already rising about the demands on players and competition for space in the calendar.

"From Fifa's point of view it means more TV dates and money, but it would be an issue for clubs, players, leagues and confederations and everyone would use it as haggling material to get something back," he added. "For a national league such as the Premier League, a week in the year is very important."

Expanding the World Cup from 32 teams removes the perfect symmetry of the competition but it does mean that Africa, Asia and Concacaf nearly double the number of places. This probably explains why, in 2017, they backed the Fifa president Gianni Infantino's expansion plan to 48 instead of the Fifa reform committee's recommendation of 40 teams, with eight groups of five countries and the top two reaching the knockout round.

Africa will have nine spots instead of five, Asia will have eight (four or five now, depending on inter-confederation play-off), Concacaf six (three or four), South America six (four or five), Europe 16 (13) and Oceania one (zero or one), which adds up to 46. The hosts USA, Mexico and Canada will take three of the Concacaf places, while the two remaining spots are set to be decided by a six-nation play-off held as a test event in the host countries.

Phillips, an expert in football development from his experience in Asia, said World Cup qualification was no guarantee of a country's footballing infrastructure improving.

"The more important thing is not the World Cup format but national team matches throughout the year," he said. "The idea that a World Cup helps development is not accurate if poorer federations put all their resources into trying to qualify the men's team for the World Cup — even if they get there they may only have two or three matches every four years.

"You see federations paying some expensive European coach, often a has-been, where it would be better to invest in grassroots facilities and coaches."



Wenger has said that the final decision on the size of the groups will be taken next year

Emerging stars

Times writers select the bright new talents who have impressed them most in Qatar



Gonçalo Ramos Portugal

MATT DICKINSON

The question everyone, including English clubs, will be asking is whether the extraordinary hat-trick by Gonçalo Ramos, on his first international start, was a freak. The variety of goals — from the blast to the placed shot to the dink — combined with the way Ramos brought out the best in those around him suggests otherwise.

Scouts will love to hear how the forward known as "Pistoleiro" for his celebration has grown into a senior role at Benfica after the departure of Darwin Núñez to Liverpool, with 14 goals in 21 appearances to lead a thriving team at the top of the league. At 21, it seems he is just getting started.

Mohammed al-Owais Saudi Arabia

OWEN SLOT

Look, I know, breakout stars are supposed to be just out of their nappies, but it often takes goalkeepers a while longer to come of age and, let's be honest, you hadn't heard of Mohammed al-Owais before this World Cup, had you? He is 31.

On day three of the World Cup, he was man of the match. And that was against Argentina. Yes, he stopped Lionel Messi et al. The man-of-the-match awards here are generally nonsense, flung out to the most famous player on the pitch. Not this time. It was completely deserved.

Owais was brilliant against Mexico too. He has command of the defence, and can do the whole sweeper-keeper thing. He plays for Al-Hilal in Riyadh. Someone should come and get him.





Sofyan Amrabat Morocco

JONATHAN NORCROFT

Bald, bearded, built like a boxer and covers the ground like a lawnmower, relentlessly churning up the opposition's moves. There is a lot to love about Sofyan Amrabat. His qualities are well known in Italy, where he is a key performer for Fiorentina, and now there is apparent interest in the 26-year-old from Tottenham and Liverpool. Playing the holding role for Morocco, he has made more tackles in the defensive third than any midfielder at the World Cup while covering a whopping 48.1km (England's leading runner is Declan Rice with 44.26km).

Born in the Netherlands, the younger brother of former Watford winger Nordin Amrabat dedicated Morocco's victory to Abdelhak Nouri, the former Ajax winger who suffered permanent brain damage after suffering a cardiac arrhythmia on the pitch.



Tyler Adams USA

MATT LAWTON

On the field Tyler Adams has impressed as a reliable, skilful player who marshalled the midfield for the USA at this World Cup and emerged as a symbol of their resilience. Yet Adams' most impressive performance in my eyes came off the field, ahead of their group B game against Iran, when tensions were particularly high and the questions went far beyond headers and volleys.

Quizzed on a range of social and political issues, from immigration to discrimination in the United States, Adams responded with a highly impressive combination of empathy, intelligence and composure. The Leeds United midfielder navigated subjects with a level of maturity and diplomacy far beyond his 23 years.



Jamal Musiala Germany

TOM RODDY

There was delight among many English fans at Germany's humiliating exit at the group stage but also a pang of predictable pain. Within the Deutschland darkness was a bright ray of light in the shape of Jamal Musiala, the 19-year-old midfielder whose balletic movement and graceful skill will have come as no surprise after his rise through the English FA's youth system. Choosing to represent Germany is understandable, given his birth in Stuttgart and move to Bayern Munich in 2019.

Qatar 2022 will be a blot on the history book of the German national team but with Musiala among the crop coming through it suggests they are not far off being a force once again. Watching him glide around the Al Bayt Stadium field, striking the post twice as Costa Rican defenders grabbed out in vain, provided confirmation of his potential. Talent is one thing, soaring on the biggest stage is another



Josko Gvardiol Croatia

JAMES GHEERBRANT

The Croatia centre back has been instantly recognisable by the mask he is wearing to protect a broken nose he suffered last month. He was sensational in the final group match against Belgium, probably the outstanding defensive performance of the tournament. His ability to break the press and dribble the ball upfield is incredible, and he also made a heroic tackle to snuff out a late chance for Romelu Lukaku. He's also a fine passer, with the ability to send his left back cantering forward with the natural angle of his left foot. Only three players have made more than his seven interceptions, only two have made more than his 25 clearances and only four centre backs have more touches in the middle third of the pitch.



Stéphanie Frappart Referee

HENRY WINTER

The most significant breakout star of the World Cup is without question Stéphanie Frappart.

Her emergence has huge positive ramifications for the sport, not simply internationally but also in the Premier League. It was a significant moment when the Frenchwoman refereed the Uefa Super Cup between Liverpool and Chelsea in 2019. She became the first woman to referee in the Champions League in 2020, then a World Cup qualifier last year, but now she has truly joined the elite, becoming the first woman to referee at the World Cup finals when she effortlessly took charge of Costa Rica and Germany.

Frappart was firm with the players, bordering on stern at times, and they immediately respected her. There was little dissent because her decision-making was mainly accurate and delivered in an unfussy manner. The reaction was huge, especially from those followers of Premier League clubs calling on the Professional Game Match Officials Limited to promote more women to a group that, by common consent, is not the best crop of referees.

Anything that improves refereeing levels should be encouraged which is why Frappart's World Cup is so significant.

Ronaldo can't accept being dispensable

DAVID WALSH



TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER MARC ASPLAND



Ronaldo, out of shot, is swamped by photographers who all wanted a picture of the 37-year-old superstar taking his unexpected place on the Portugal subs' bench

In the opening scene of the 1994 film *The Shawshank Redemption*, Ellis Boyd "Red" Redding's application for early release is rejected by the prison's parole board. Red has served 20 years of a life sentence but contrary to our first impression, Red actually doesn't want to be paroled.

As the film's narrator, he later tells us why. "There's a harsh truth to face. No way I'm gonna make it on the outside."

Cristiano Ronaldo's world, with all its wealth, fame and attention, is a different kind of penitentiary but still one that imprisons him. He built it himself, brick by brick; the goals, the headers, the volleys, the victories, the trophies, the awards, the celebrations. They made him the world's most famous man and he has become the world's wealthiest footballer.

He never needed humility, nor any appreciation of what was best for the team. He was best for the team and his goals took care of everything. During their time working together at Real Madrid, the head coach Carlo Ancelotti once wanted to play Ronaldo up front alongside Karim Benzema, allowing the coach to have Gareth Bale and James Rodríguez in wider roles.

Ancelotti was sure Ronaldo could play centre forward and that it wouldn't adversely affect his performance. Ronaldo disagreed, arguing he was better cutting infield from a wide position. The head coach deferred to the player. "Who am I to argue?" Ancelotti wrote in a book on leadership. "How can I change the position of a player who scores 60 goals a season?"

Back then Ronaldo got what he wanted. Teams were built around him but that was cool. He scored so many goals, won so many games the trade-off was easily borne. Vince Lombardi, visionary coach to the dominant Green Bay Packers in the NFL of the 1960s, defined teamwork as "individual commitment to a group effort. That is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilisation work".

Ronaldo showed a team could be made subservient to one individual and still be successful. What he asked for, he was given. All the while, he was locking himself into a world from which there would be no escape. Ronaldo laid down the terms under which he played and wouldn't consider that maybe there was a better way. As long as he scored 60 goals in a season, he could do whatever he wished.

With his film star looks and his sculptured body, he was self-obsessed but not self-aware. The years passed, his powers diminished but he couldn't acknowledge it. After nine seasons, he left Real Madrid for Juventus. "For the first four or five years, I felt like Cristiano Ronaldo. Less so after. The president looked at me in a way that suggested I was no longer indispensable if you know what I mean. That is what made me think about leaving."

It was as if he believed he could be eternally indispensable. At Juventus he scored 101 goals in three seasons. Enough to convince him he was still the man. He couldn't see and wouldn't accept that his arrival was the beginning of the end for a fine Juventus team. In the four years before he joined, they'd been to two Champions League finals. With him, they never got close.

Juventus's three most experienced players, Gianluigi Buffon, Leonardo Bonucci and Giorgio Chiellini all expressed reservations about Ronaldo's influence on the team. "Subconsciously players started to think his presence alone was enough to win games," said Bonucci. "We began to fall a little short in our daily work, the humility, the sacrifice, the desire to be there for your team-mates day after day."

Buffon said he believed Ronaldo's presence changed the DNA of the team and not for the better. Chiellini said they got to that point in their



Ronaldo watches on as Portugal rack up the goals against Switzerland

relationship with Ronaldo where he needed a new challenge and a team that would play for him. Manchester United didn't see beyond the goals and bought themselves an expensive problem.

Ronaldo wouldn't get what Brentford's astute owner Matthew Benham means when he says goalscoring isn't the most important measure when he goes to the market for a centre forward. "If I am looking at a striker," Benham said, "I absolutely do not care about his goalscoring record. For me the only thing that is interesting is how the team do collectively, offensively and defensively, within the context of an individual's performance." At Juventus and Manchester United, Ronaldo scored the goals while the team regressed. The team had to play at his tempo and accept that he could no longer press the opposition. If he didn't score, he didn't contribute.

And all the while he grew older, losing much of what he had during his great years.

In this prison of his own creation, he turns down parole while clamouring for indispensability. He laughed when Talk TV interviewer Piers Morgan asked if had more money in his bank account than followers on Instagram? Ronaldo has 509 million Instagram followers. "That's a good question, it's probably about the same," he said jokingly.

Still, he was pleased the question had been asked. Inside his world, you take comfort wherever you can find it.

Like his great rival Lionel Messi, Ronaldo is in Qatar for one last shot at the World Cup. And like Messi, he too is captain of his country. In Ronaldo's case, the armband is recognition of what he's achieved in his career, not of leadership qualities.

He shed tears during the playing of the Portuguese national anthem for their opening game against Ghana. In that moment was he seeing something beyond himself, something greater than Cristiano Ronaldo? Near the end of the game Osman Bukari scored Ghana's second goal and then made a decent attempt to replicate Ronaldo's goal celebration.

The camera then turned to Ronaldo, on the bench having been substituted, and his pout expressed disapproval. Was that because Bukari had commandeered his routine or because his team had conceded a goal?

As always, everything is filmed and pored over. The goals, the celebrations, the smiles have mostly been replaced with the frustrated body language, the pouts, the shrugs, the grimaces and the glowers of a waning star. This footballer is not ageing gracefully.

After a show of petulance was picked up by the camera when he was substituted against Korea, the Portugal head coach Fernando Santos said he really didn't like that and Ronaldo was left out of the team for their round-of-16 game against Switzerland.

Without him, the team sparkled, and his replacement Gonçalo Ramos, scored three times. Santos says Ronaldo still has a role to play in this tournament but it's likely to be as a substitute. And if there's one place in the penitentiary that Ronaldo doesn't want to be, it's on that bench.

For so long Cristiano Ronaldo had to be indispensable. That was until he was indispensable no more.

Morocco offered absolutely nothing, says Rodri

The Manchester City midfielder Rodri has criticised Morocco's counterattacking game plan after the North African nation stunned Spain on penalties to set up a World Cup quarter-final against Portugal (writes Dom Smith).

Morocco had only 28 per cent of possession across 90 minutes and extra time, and Spain's control peaked in the second half of normal time when their possession reached 81 per cent. But the Spanish then missed all three of their spot kicks as Morocco prevailed 3-0 in the penalty shoot-out.

Rodri, 26, condemned Morocco's approach after Spain's unlikely defeat, saying: "Morocco offered absolutely nothing, without disrespecting them. In the game, they did nothing. They just waited to counter us."

He added: "They were very clear about how they wanted to play. There's not much more to say, penalties are like that. We're going home; it's one of the worst days."

Hazard retires from international football

Belgium captain Eden Hazard, 31, has announced his retirement from international football after his team's World Cup ended in a group stage exit. Hazard played in all three games but did not score as Belgium finished third in Group F.

"I have decided to put an end to my international career. The succession is ready," Hazard wrote on Instagram.

Hazard made his debut in 2008 and scored 33 times in 126 appearances.

Germany coach Flick to stay until Euro 2024

The Germany coach Hansi Flick will keep his job and lead the team to Euro 2024 despite exiting the World Cup at the group stage. The German Football Association (DFB) president Bernd Neuendorf said the body had "full confidence" in Flick.

"We as a team can achieve much more than we showed in Qatar," Flick said in the statement. "We missed a big opportunity there. We'll learn our lessons from it."

Fifa fine Croatian and Serbian federations

The Croatian and Serbian football federations have been fined by Fifa for Balkan political statements at the World Cup. The Croatians were fined 50,000 Swiss francs (about £43,500) after fans taunted Canada goalkeeper Milan Borjan, who has Serbian family ties. The Serbians were fined 20,000 Swiss francs for hanging a banner in the dressing room showing a map including the territory of Kosovo, its former province.



Marc Aspland's World Cup in pictures

I was lucky enough to record a little piece of history here in Qatar in the opening week as Saudi Arabia produced one of the biggest shocks in World Cup history.

They came from behind to beat favourites Argentina 2-1 in their Group C opening match at the Lusail Stadium and I was able to capture some of the jubilant celebrations.

The following night, Japan stunned Germany when substitutes Ritsu Doan and Takuma Asano came off the bench to score the late goals that would beat the four-time winners 2-1, a result that ultimately meant that the 2014 winners crashed out at the group stage.

Photographing the Seleção always raises the volume levels and it seems that both Brazil and Argentina are everyone's second-favourite teams here in Doha and there was huge noise when Richarlison scored his stunning scissor kick in their opening game against Serbia.

The second favourite sport, especially among the migrant workers, is cricket and on any piece of urban wasteland you can find fiercely competitive matches between the Nepalese, Indians and Bangladeshi workers.

One such match as the sun set has produced my favourite World Cup picture.



Left A young Argentina fan enjoys a kick around on the back streets of Doha

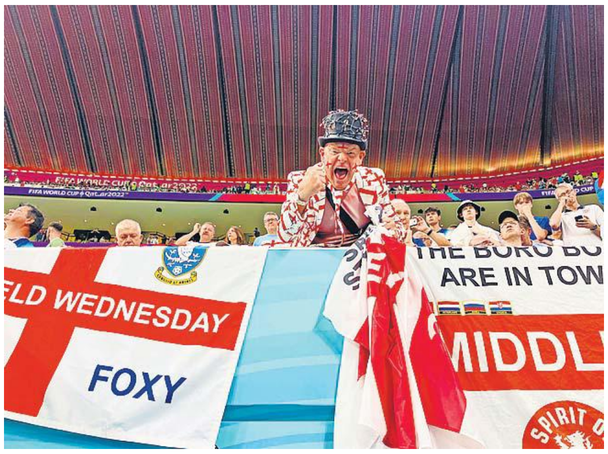
Right Brazil's Richarlison introduces himself to the tournament in spectacular fashion

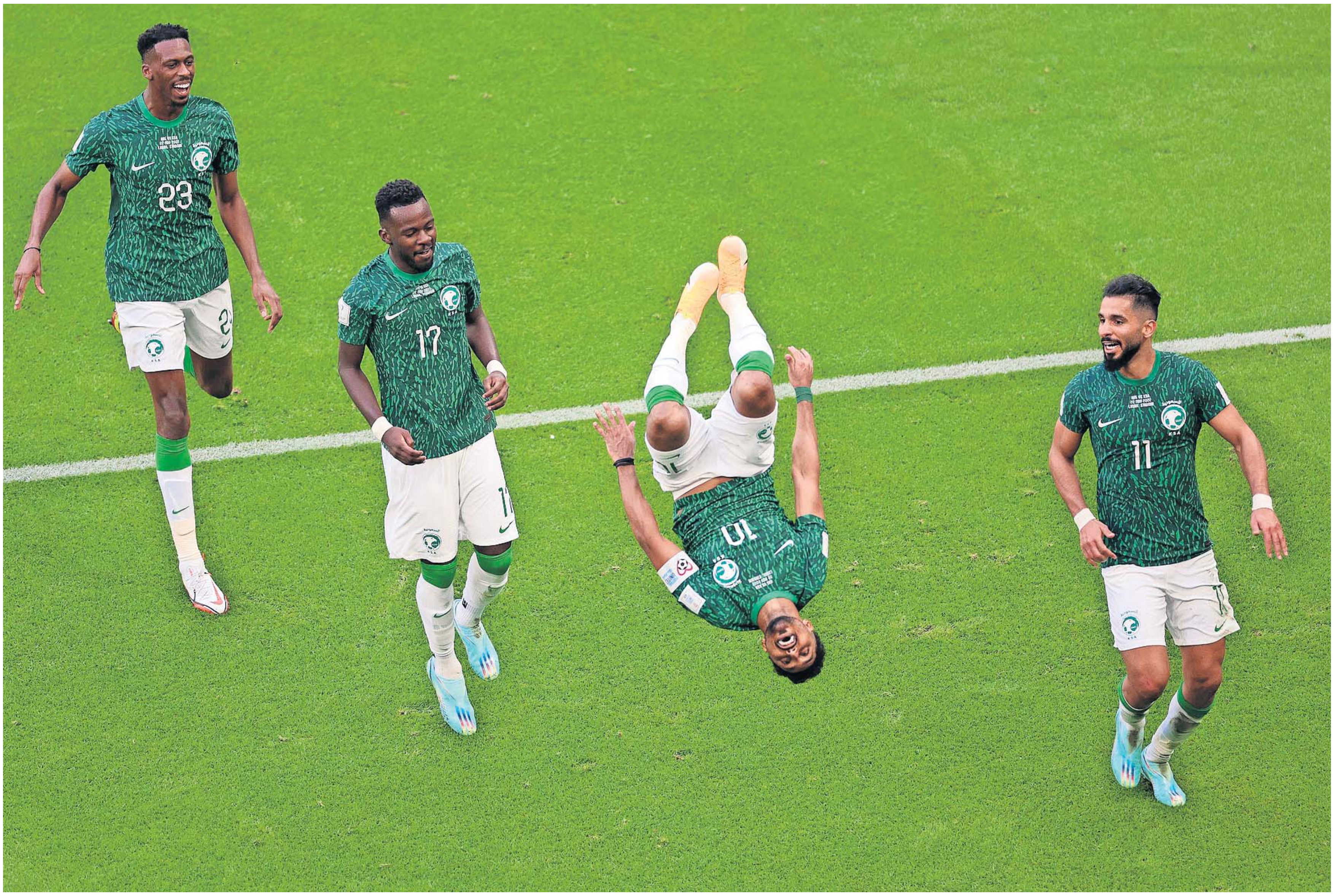
Below Left Brazil and Argentina shirts appear to be the favoured attire among local youngsters

Below England fans make their presence felt against the USA







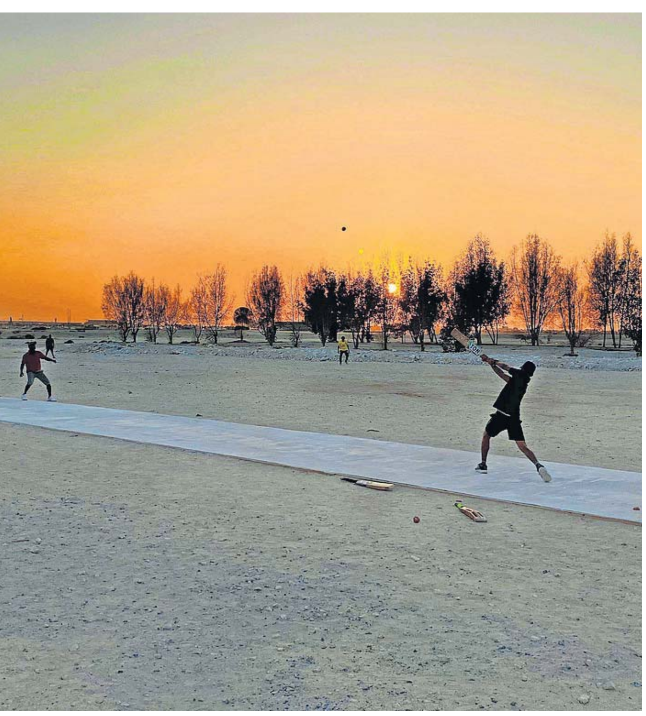












Above Fireworks have illuminated the stadiums at the World Cup with shows lighting up the half-time intervals

Left Migrant workers enjoy a game of cricket at sunset off the Al Rayyan Road, in my favourite image from the tournament so far

Far Left Salem Al Dawsari celebrates his goal as Saudi Arabia provide an early group upset against Argentina



World Cup in numbers

by Bill Edgar

Playing cards right

England have not received a yellow or red card over the course of five games for the first time since March to June 1990. They have not been disciplined in any of their first four matches at this World Cup or in their last pre-tournament fixture, against Germany in September. The game before that, against Italy, featured their most recent card, a booking for Jack Grealish.

The only team aside from England to have received neither a booking nor a dismissal in their opening four matches of a World Cup were Austria in 1978. Since the Austrians achieved that feat, a total of 172 teams have played at least four times in a single World Cup. Saudi Arabia racked up 14 yellow cards in their three matches in Qatar.

Fast starters

England are the first team in World Cup history to have recorded three wins by at least a three-goal margin in their first four games of a tournament: they beat Iran 6-2 and defeated both Wales and Senegal 3-0 (the exception was a 0-0 draw against the United States). There have been many close shaves, notably by Hungary in 1954: they won their first four matches, beating South Korea 9-0, West Germany 8-3, Brazil 4-2 and Uruguay 4-2.

Resting easy

England have experienced few moments of alarm at this World Cup. Of the 32 teams at the tournament, 30 have conceded a goal that left them either level or trailing. Of the other two, the only goal shipped by Morocco left them still one goal ahead against Canada; but when England conceded their two goals, they were left 4-1 and 6-2 ahead (against Iran).

Holding firm

Of the teams remaining in Qatar, only England and Morocco are unbeaten in both qualifying and the tournament itself. Belgium, France, Brazil, Argentina, Serbia and Switzerland all entered this World Cup having not lost a match in qualifying but all have succumbed here — the first four of those in unexpected circumstances against African or Asian opposition — Belgium to Morocco, France to Tunisia, Brazil to Cameroon and Argentina to Saudi Arabia.

KANE'S TOURNAMENT TARGET

Harry Kane is set to equal Ashley Cole's record of 22 major tournament appearances for England on Saturday. The Tottenham striker is due to play his 11th World Cup fixture, matching his tally in European Championships

Player	World Cup	European Championships	Total
Ashley Cole	14	8	22
Harry Kane	10	11	21
Steven Gerrard	12	9	21
Raheem Sterling	11	10	21
Wayne Rooney	11	10	21
Peter Shilton	17	3	20
David Beckham	13	7	20
Michael Owen	12	7	19

Minnows in spotlight

But England and Morocco are not the only unbeaten teams across qualifying and the tournament. Drum roll for Burkina Faso, Lesotho, Burundi, Trinidad and Tobago, Guatemala and Montserrat: they also avoided defeat, only suffering elimination in their respective qualifying campaigns on penalties after two draws (Burundi), on away goals after two draws (Lesotho) or having finished runners-up in their group (the other four).

Crossing borders

Morocco's squad includes players born in Belgium, Canada and Spain: Morocco beat Belgium and Canada in the group phase and knocked Spain out in the round of 16. When Morocco face Portugal in the quarter-finals the two squads will include 21 foreign-born players: 14 for Morocco and seven for Portugal. England earned a meeting with France by beating a nation whose squad contains nine French-born players (Senegal).

Senior skippers

The eight quarter-final captains include five players aged 35 or over: Brazil's Thiago Silva, 38, Croatia's Luka Modric, 37, Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo, 37, Argentina's Lionel Messi, 35, and France's Hugo Lloris, 35. The eight captains have won a total of 979 caps (the other three are England's Harry Kane, Morocco's Romain Saiss and Holland's Virgil van Dijk); that total will increase to 995 if they play in each of their teams' remaining matches at this tournament. The quarter-final between Argentina and Holland will feature the youngest and oldest of the 32 managers at this World Cup: Argentina's Lionel Scaloni is 44 and Holland's Louis van Gaal is 71.

Coady curiosity

Conor Coady has sat out 100 per cent of England's games at Euro 2020 and this World Cup but only 1.4 per cent of league matches for his club over the past 5½ seasons. He has been inactive for all 11 England fixtures at those two tournaments, yet he has started all but three league games for Wolverhampton Wanderers or Everton since the summer of 2017.

Pair alone

The only pairing that could meet twice in this World Cup are Croatia and Morocco — their group is the only one to have supplied two quarter-finalists. They drew 0-0 in their opening match and can only face each other in the final.

JUSTIN SETTERFIELD/GETTY IMAGES



Lloris, 35, is one of five captains in the quarter-finals who is 35 or over. The oldest is Thiago Silva, who is aged 38

Route to the Final

GROUP A		P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
A1	HOLLAND (Q)	3	2	1	0	5	1	+4	7
A2	SENEGAL (Q)	3	2	0	1	5	4	+1	6
A3	ECUADOR	3	1	1	1	4	3	+1	4
A4	QATAR	3	0	0	3	1	7	-6	0

GROUP B		P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
B1	ENGLAND (Q)	3	2	1	0	9	2	+7	7
B2	USA (Q)	3	1	2	0	2	1	+1	5
B3	IRAN	3	1	0	2	4	7	-3	3
B4	WALES	3	0	1	2	1	6	-5	1

GROUP C		P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
C1	ARGENTINA (Q)	3	2	0	1	5	2	+3	6
C2	POLAND (Q)	3	1	1	1	2	2	0	4
C3	MEXICO	3	1	1	1	2	3	-1	4
C4	SAUDI ARABIA	3	1	0	2	3	5	-2	3

GROUP D		P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
D1	FRANCE (Q)	3	2	0	1	6	3	+3	6
D2	AUSTRALIA (Q)	3	2	0	1	3	4	-1	6
D3	TUNISIA	3	1	1	1	1	1	0	4
D4	DENMARK	3	0	1	2	1	3	-2	1

GROUP E		P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
E1	JAPAN (Q)	3	2	0	1	4	3	+1	6
E2	SPAIN (Q)	3	1	1	1	9	3	+6	4
E3	GERMANY	3	1	1	1	6	5	+1	4
E4	COSTA RICA	3	1	0	2	3	11	-8	3

GROUP F		P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
F1	MOROCCO (Q)	3	2	1	0	4	1	+3	7
F2	CROATIA (Q)	3	1	2	0	4	1	+3	5
F3	BELGIUM	3	1	1	1	1	2	-1	4
F4	CANADA	3	0	0	3	2	7	-5	0

GROUP G		P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
G1	BRAZIL (Q)	3	2	0	1	3	1	+2	6
G2	SWITZERL'D (Q)	3	2	0	1	4	3	+1	6
G3	CAMEROON	3	1	1	1	4	4	0	4
G4	SERBIA	3	0	1	2	5	8	-3	1

GROUP H		P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
H1	PORTUGAL (Q)	3	2	0	1	6	4	+2	6
H2	STH KOREA (Q)	3	1	1	1	4	4	0	4
H3	URUGUAY	3	1	1	1	2	2	0	4
H4	GHANA	3	1	0	2	5	7	-2	3

ROUND OF 16

Saturday, December 3
Khalifa International Stadium

A1 HOLLAND 3
Depay 10, Blind 45+1, Dumfries 81

B2 UNITED STATES 1
Wright 76

Referee: W Sampaio (Brazil) **Attendance:** 44,846

Sunday, December 4
Al Bayt Stadium

B1 ENGLAND 3
Henderson 38, Kane 45+3, Saka 57

A2 SENEGAL 0

Referee: I Barton (El Salvador) **Attendance:** 65,985

Monday, December 5
Al Janoub Stadium

E1 JAPAN 1
Maeda 43

F2 CROATIA 1
Perisic 55

(aet; 1-1 after 90min; Croatia win 3-1 on pens)
Referee: I Elfath (United States) **Attendance:** 42,523

Tuesday, December 6
Education City Stadium

F1 MOROCCO 0

E2 SPAIN 0

(aet; Morocco win 3-0 on pens)
Referee: F Rapallini (Argentina) **Attendance:** 44,667

Saturday, December 3
Ahmad bin Ali Stadium

C1 Argentina 2
Messi 35, Álvarez 57

D2 Australia 1
Fernández 77 (og)

Referee: S Marciniak (Poland) **Attendance:** 45,032

Sunday, December 4
Al Thumama Stadium

D1 FRANCE 3
Giroud 44, Mbappé 74, 90+1

C2 POLAND 1
Lewandowski 90+9 (pen)

Referee: J Valenzuela (Venezuela) **Attendance:** 40,989

Monday, December 5
Stadium 974

G1 BRAZIL 4
Vinícius Júnior 7, Neymar 13 (pen), Richarlison 29, Lucas Paquetá 36

H2 SOUTH KOREA 1
Paik 76

Referee: C Turpin (France) **Attendance:** 43,847

Tuesday, December 6
Lusail Stadium

H1 PORTUGAL 6
Ramos 17, 51, 67, Pepe 33, Guerreiro 55, Leão 90+2

G2 SWITZERLAND 1
Akanji 58

Referee: C Arturo Ramos (Mexico) **Attendance:** 83,720

QUARTER-FINALS

Tomorrow, 3pm — QF1
Education City Stadium
CROATIA
BRAZIL

Tomorrow, 7pm — QF2
7pm Lusail Stadium
HOLLAND
ARGENTINA

Saturday, December 10, 3pm — QF3
Al Thumama Stadium
MOROCCO
PORTUGAL

Saturday, December 10, 7pm — QF4
Al Bayt Stadium
ENGLAND
FRANCE

SEMI-FINALS

Tuesday, December 13, 7pm
Lusail Stadium
WINNER QUARTER-FINAL 1
WINNER QUARTER-FINAL 2

Wednesday, December 14, 7pm
Al Bayt Stadium
WINNER QUARTER-FINAL 3
WINNER QUARTER-FINAL 4

THIRD-PLACE

Saturday, December 17, 3pm
Khalifa International Stadium
LOSER SEMI-FINAL 1
LOSER SEMI-FINAL 2

FINAL

Sunday, December 18, 3pm
Lusail Stadium
WINNER SEMI-FINAL 1
WINNER SEMI-FINAL 2*



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FUTURE OF RETAIL & ECOMMERCE

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08 FIVE CHALLENGES FOR PHYSICAL STORES
18 WHERE MADE.COM WENT WRONG



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FUTURE OF RETAIL & ECOMMERCE

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CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

Uncertain climate: retailers weigh sustainability demands

Retailers must adapt their convenience-centric approach to meet environmental demands among younger consumers. How can they strike the best balance?

Jonathan Evans

For many younger consumers, the environment is the defining issue of our time. That's hardly surprising, given the growing fears over global warming. It is also, though, influencing their shopping habits, posing a serious challenge for retailers.

Research by consultancy Alchemmy shows that 75% of Gen Z shoppers say their purchasing decisions are influenced by whether a brand or product aligns with their green values. Lucy Gibbs, Alchemmy's director of retail and consumer, believes the figure reflects a younger generation that wants to engage with brands which are authentic in their efforts to become more sustainable.

"To meet the sustainability expectations of Gen Z, it is not enough for retailers to appear as if sustainability is important to them," she says. "Instead, retailers need to work with consumers to make sustainability profitable in the long term and incentivise them to want and choose more sustainable options."

That may be easier said than done. Shoppers are used to the convenience of endless choice, speedy deliveries and seamless returns, all of which come at a high environmental cost.

The British Retail Consortium (BRC) recently acknowledged that the sector's annual greenhouse gas emissions are 80% higher than those of all road traffic in the UK. Significant carbon outputs are evident across the whole retail supply chain, from the energy required to run in-store operations to the fuel used by delivery vehicles.

In November, COP27 again highlighted the need for immediate action on climate change across both the public and private sectors to avert environmental catastrophe, with fears that we're unlikely to meet the goal of limiting global warming to a 1.5°C increase. With Gen Z's spending power on the rise, businesses that don't deliver on sustainability risk turning off value-orientated consumers. It puts the big-name retailers in something of a double bind.

Namrata Sandhu is CEO and co-founder of Vaayu, a software development company that allows retailers to calculate and cut their carbon emissions in real time. She believes retailers must first understand their total carbon outputs before they can identify how their climate strategy will impact the customer experience.



Teamjackson via iStock

For instance, scope three greenhouse gas emissions – which include all emissions generated up and down the supply chain – can account for as much as 80% of a retailer's total carbon footprint, according to McKinsey. This can rise to as much as 98% for home and fashion brands. Because many of these emissions aren't directly in the control of the retailer, they are difficult to accurately calculate or mitigate.

To overcome this, retailers must include emissions criteria and reporting into all procurement discussions with vendors, Sandhu suggests, so they can build a holistic view of their total carbon output.

"You can't cut what you can't measure," she says. "Retailers need granular and accurate data across their entire supply chain to identify issues and what they can do about them. They also need the ability to test different scenarios to drive business decisions that provide significant carbon reductions.

"It is only by optimising logistics and supply chains that retailers can offer the same level of customer service while making tangible steps towards sustainability goals."

But accurate data alone won't itself solve retailers' climate conundrum. If the UK is to truly move away from its throwaway culture, then retailers must create a new customer proposition which is centred on sustainability.

The good news is that consumers – particularly those from younger generations – have indicated a willingness to pay a premium for sustainability. What's more, they also proactively want to shop with brands that are dedicated to embedding sustainable practices into their operations.

One option is dedicating as much focus to post-sale as to pre-sale, according to Stephanie Crespin, CEO and founder of Reflaunt.

The status quo around customer returns, for example, prioritises convenience above all else, with consumers able to freely return products despite the heavy environmental toll of shipping and the eventual disposal of goods into landfill. But Crespin thinks retailers should instead seek to minimise the number of returns they need to handle in the first place. She argues that better sizing information, more detailed product descriptions and highly tailored personalisation to connect consumers with items they're less likely to return would improve rather than degrade the customer experience.

"We are still in a retail dynamic where all efforts and investments are funnelled into making that first sale," she explains. "Little investment and responsibility are taken for what happens after that."

A slight move up the value chain would also help. "It's a win for the planet and for consumers' wallets to invest in quality products that hold decent residual value if they are resold," Crespin explains.

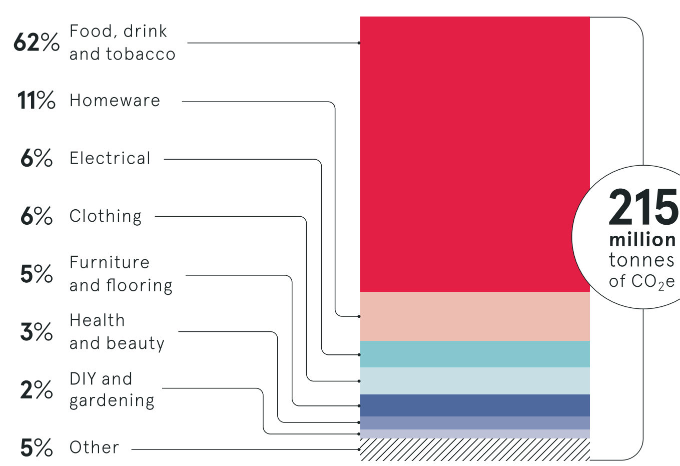
Thomas Walters, CEO and founder of advertising agency Billion Dollar Boy, agrees with this view. He believes, however, the success of this approach and any sustainability efforts driven by brands hinges on retailers being consistent and committed in their approach.

"Transparency is key," he says. "For example, if as a business you're offering free returns, then you need to demonstrate that those returns aren't simply going to landfill. And at times when you're potentially falling short of your climate responsibilities, you need to be honest and say, 'We're doing this well – but we know we can do better and this is how we're going to achieve change.'

"Sustainability has to be long-term, holistic and consistent across the business."

FOOD AND HOMEWARE ARE THE TWO BIGGEST POLLUTERS IN THE RETAIL WORLD

UK greenhouse gas emissions 1990 to 2019, by retail segment



Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2022



BRAND STRATEGY

What retailers can learn from fandom flagships

To keep bricks and mortar alive, retail brands must build emotional connections with consumers. They need to foster fans, not just cater to shoppers

Nick Easen

Retailers face a major challenge in the post-pandemic world: consumer inertia. Why would anyone traipse to a wet, windy and busy high street when most products are just a click away?

This is a big problem for retailers with a physical presence on the high street or in shopping centres. In response, some megabrands are turning to theatrics and magical experiences in flagship stores to draw people in.

Instead of simply being palaces of products, flagships are now playgrounds for experiences and emotions. There's the new Harry Potter store in Midtown New York, Nike's concept outlet in London's Battersea Power Station, or the Google store in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

Such brands are investing in new levels of engagement with fans in the flesh. But it does mean cultivating a new breed of consumers.

"These flagships are designed for followers," explains Michelle Du-Prât, chief strategy officer at Household, a brand agency which helped create the new Harry Potter store. "In these spaces, fans can connect over shared passions and celebrate their love for the brand. Hyper-engaged communities are consistently seeking out new experiences and heightened levels of immersion, as well as participation, which they do not find on other channels. It's a win-win for brands."

That's because emotionally connected customers are more than twice as valuable as highly satisfied customers, according to research published in *Harvard Business Review*. The 'fandom flagships' are possible because brands can now target customers with personalised messaging and curate communities across channels, fuelling interest and driving fresh engagement with bricks and mortar.

"The halo effect that is also created over the rest of the estate can be considerable," explains Nick Cooper, global executive director for insights and analytics at brand management company Landor & Fitch. "This has certainly been the case for brands such as Lego, where their investment in flagship stores has driven higher sales through other retail formats and quite often through third-party stores as well."

The 'fandom flagship' Harry Potter store on Fifth Avenue in New York

> **The halo effect that is also created over the rest of the estate can be considerable. This has certainly been the case for brands such as Lego**

So what can other retailers learn from the megabrands rolling out these fandom flagships? Is it possible to replicate their success?

There are four factors at work here, according to Cooper. First, brands must have an active, omnichannel channel strategy: too many retail stores are passive. Second, it's all about the experience in-store, which takes considerable investment. Third, brands must offer something new every time and excite people. And finally, human interaction is vital.

Thankfully, brands can use existing data to help with several of these challenges. "Companies thinking of going down this route should adjust their expectations, switching out typical metrics that are used heavily in retail, such as store revenue and sales density, in favour of brand perception and brand equity," says Naji El-Arifi, head of innovation at Wunderman Thompson Commerce. "However, these metrics are harder to measure and can take time to bear fruit," he warns.

Successful megabrands that develop fan and store formats invest hugely in understanding consumer needs at a granular, data-driven level. They use this data to foster fan bases. In this social media-fuelled age, fans then become content creators online in their own right.

Nike is a pioneer of this approach, encouraging customers to join its community, building loyalty with new product launches and invites to in-store events. Brands like Nike have easy access to consumer content, minimising the need to invest time and money in creating their own. In the end, retailers become fan facilitators, empowered by data.

"Smart brands are even leveraging content to authentically represent fans enjoying their flagship experiences and helping establish an even deeper sense of belonging in-store," explains Du-Prât. "Take Uniqlo's store in Harajuku, Japan. It uses more than 200 LED touchscreen panels to showcase curated fan content, spotlighting outfits and encouraging shoppers to browse styles most relevant to them."

Such fandom flagships rise above the banal, predictable and mundane. They're the front-end of souped-up, consumer-led retail, akin to Formula One's relationship with the rest of the motor industry.

These flagships produce innovations that trickle down to regular bricks and mortar over time. For instance, Burberry offers personalised shopping via augmented reality in its flagship store in Shenzhen, China. Gucci presents a kind of virtual flagship in the metaverse with its Gucci Garden space and its team-up with Roblox, a well-known virtual reality gaming platform, where fans can spend time and money in a digital reality.

"Beyond experiential stores, we can also expect stores to become multi-purpose, allowing customers to have a wide array of experiences, engaging and connecting them with a brand's ethos," predicts El-Arifi. "For instance, Alibaba's Hema store in China brings a grocery store, distribution centre and direct sales platform into one place."

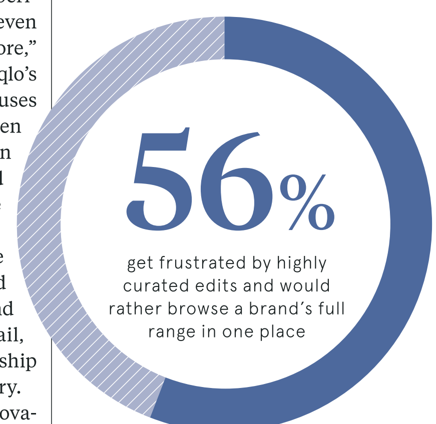
One of the biggest challenges for innovative flagships is privacy concerns among fans, especially since these experiences are increasingly data-driven. Fans want to interact with and buy from brands that they trust. As Du-Prât points out, brands need to be transparent about how they use fans' data, and it must benefit and add value to a consumer's shopping experience.

"The trust gap increases the younger consumers are," says Steve Lidbury, executive creative director for the UK and Europe at brand experience agency Imagination. "Brands therefore need to think of new and innovative ways to get their audiences to opt in to sharing their data. Cookies and data collection today are rarely in the consumer's interest, and mainly focus on the brand's interest. There needs to be a value exchange between brands and consumers."

That's probably the secret sauce for all fandoms and flagships: value exchange. Brands that nurture it will increase their chances of success.







Westfield, 2020

INSIGHT

‘Sustainable retail is a question of demand’

Retailers and customers share a responsibility for getting sustainability initiatives off the ground, says **Andy Mulcahy**, strategy and insight director at IMRG

The move towards a more sustainable form of retail has been talked about for years, but we have to accept that very little tangible progress has actually been made. So, why is this, and whose fault is it?

One crucial thing to understand about retailers is that their activity is heavily dictated by demand. Retailers work hard to stay on top of what their target demographic want – their likes and dislikes, behavioural trends and their engagement with cultural issues – so they can offer the range of products that best fits their lifestyles.

The basics underpinning demand are as follows. If retailers present options for which there is limited demand, they won't sell to the extent required. Where retailers get the selection right, the potential for strong sales is high. So, effectively, retailers take their lead from their customers.

Attitudes towards sustainability are no exception to this rule, although there does seem to be an expectation that the onus is on businesses to sort out the problem. An individual might feel they have very limited options to improve their footprint – by, for instance, eating less meat or driving less. Businesses, on the other hand, actually create the products and services that individuals access, and some have huge resources they could direct towards really making a difference.

One challenge is that improving sustainability usually entails cost; more expensive materials might be required, or more complex processes to underpin activity. Where businesses increase cost, they also need to see a return to cover it, so for sustainability to get the investment it needs, businesses need to feel that it will increase the appeal of their services and stimulate demand.

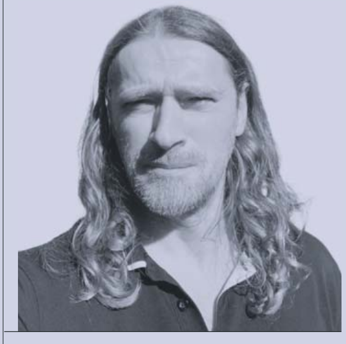
It's not like some retailers haven't tried to bring in services and updates to accommodate the move towards sustainability. Several retailers have taken a ‘circular' approach by enabling their customers to trade in old items for credit. Others are willing to repair worn-down items, or offer second-hand ranges and clothing rental. However, what sounds good on the homepage doesn't necessarily reflect the reality of demand. Indeed, if you speak to those retailers off the record, these offerings tend not to have proven as popular as they might have hoped.

And thus we find ourselves at a bit of an impasse. Services and approaches have been put in place, but retailers can't currently justify the investment required to scale them up (which would help bring in efficiencies and reduce costs to the customer). Demand is the answer: we, as customers, have to show retailers that we're ready to evolve too.

There are some simple things we can do to show that we're serious: select slower deliveries and use click and collect over home delivery; return superfluous items such as carrier bags and hangers back to stores (in short, diverting things away from the bin); buy more circular products, such as second-hand or refurbished options; and use refill containers for foodstuffs to eliminate single-use packaging.

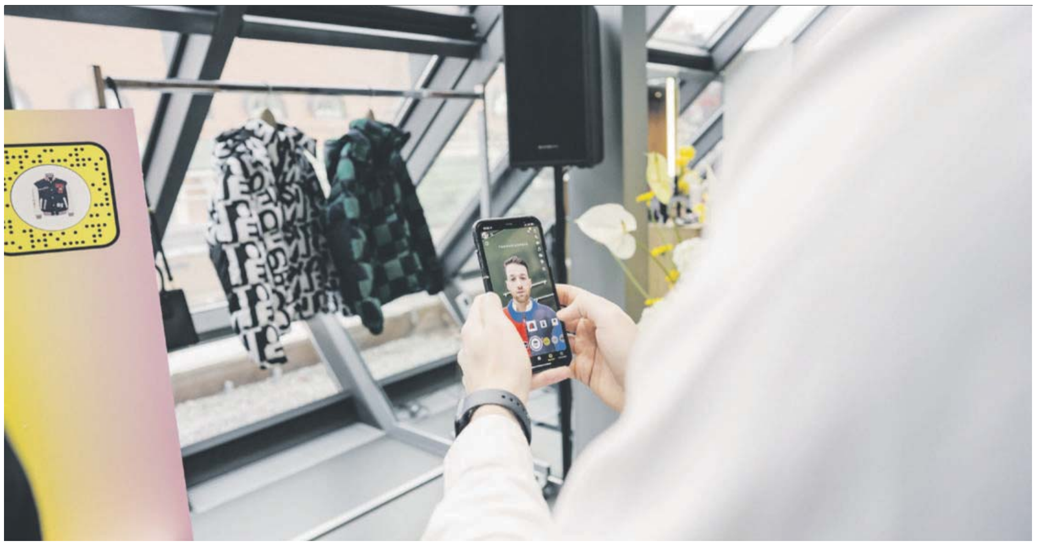
The more that we start to do things like this, the more businesses will pick up on it and make it easy and convenient for us to do so. The biggest celebrities need to lead the charge as well, driving sustainability actions and making it cool to do so. Something that has been so ponderous to get moving might actually happen at some speed once momentum reaches a certain point.

There are a lot of good people working in retail who genuinely want to make great strides in this area and there's a lot of good will towards it as a concept. But we need to support retailers in becoming sustainable. They can't do it by themselves. ●



Andy Mulcahy
Strategy and insight director
IMRG

Commercial feature



AR promises to reimagine customer experience

Augmented reality has the potential to create better conversion, tighter consumer-brand relationships, and a more inclusive ecommerce ecosystem. So, why are some retailers holding back?

Augmented reality (AR) is fast becoming a key component of consumer journeys.

Thanks in part to the Covid-19 pandemic, forward-thinking retailers have accelerated their efforts to replicate in-store experiences digitally. Ikea has built the capability to place furniture virtually in customers' living rooms. Meanwhile, brands as diverse as Dior, Puma and Lego have all collaborated with Snap to augment their ecommerce offering.

While most brands have an online platform, only some take advantage of this format's full potential. "[Augmented reality] is a far more engaging and personalised media format than static images or a video of an item," says Fintan Gillespie, Snap's head of UK Enterprise.

Gillespie sees AR as a solution to many of the problems brands face in the "broken" landscape of ecommerce where convenience is king and customer experience has taken a back seat. Shoppers are far more likely to leave a physical store having made a purchase; something augmented reality promises to change.

Shopify research has found that customers that interact with AR in online shopping ecosystems are 94% more likely to commit to a purchase. Additionally, 54% of consumers consider retail the ideal application of this technology.

"It's personalised," Gillespie explains. Customers have the opportunity to 'try' before they buy in a virtual setting, eliminating purchasing doubts to a large extent. "Engagement is so important. You get a feel of an item. The only other way you're going to get that is by going into a physical store," he says.

Retailers can now reach customers that have previously felt excluded. For example, the beauty industry has seen significant advances in inclusivity and safety as brands have integrated AR into online experiences. Users can accurately test the tone of makeup based on their skin colour or try out a new shade of lipstick without a physical sample. Tools like Snap's 'Inclusive Camera' can make digital spaces more accessible.

Despite a positive reception from shoppers, some brands have been slow to adopt. The application of AR in ecommerce is still perceived as a novelty. Gillespie believes that many brands view this use of technology as "just for fun", overlooking the potential value add to customer journeys that this can have.

He hypothesises that most brands don't yet have the infrastructure to measure success in this area. "Measuring it is the key. If you don't have a way to measure it, then your CFO is never going to sign it off," says Gillespie.

> Measuring it is the key. If you don't have a way to measure it, then your CFO is never going to sign it off

However, the headline figures around increased conversion in the market at large should quickly change perspectives. Gillespie explains that late adopters haven't missed the boat, and getting started is relatively simple.

Companies can start by testing success with a small sample of items. Then, by scanning images of their products and sending the information to third-party apps, 3D designers can quickly recreate the items digitally.

Snap achieves this for partners through an open-source platform called Lens Studio. Retailers send their product information through an API, at minimal cost and effort.

"It's not difficult for a retailer to go and scan five items and get a proof of concept," says Gillespie. "Put them on a landing page through the API's that we provide, and then see whether users are buying at a higher rate. If that's the case, your investment thesis is done."

Crucially, retailers don't have to build their own AR capability. Instead, consumers can interact with the solution outside the business's existing ecommerce architecture. "It doesn't matter where the touchpoint is as long as it happens," says Gillespie. By leveraging the reach of third-party platforms, retailers can reach new consumers and gauge success using those platforms' native analytics.

Brands that are using AR to create better shopping experiences are tapping into a golden opportunity to engage audiences and build tighter consumer relationships long-term. He concludes: "When you're thinking about building customer relationships between a retailer and potential users, the engagement of the technology stands out. It's just far superior to any other media type."

For more information, visit forbusiness.snapchat.com/augmentalityshift-uk



d3sign via Getty Images

TECHNOLOGY

Why AI is the smart route to customer retention

Personalisation is the key to customer loyalty, a major goal for any business. Companies are using AI to help provide bespoke experiences

Morag Cuddeford-Jones

Whichever way you slice it, there's one way to grow revenues that stands above the others: keep your customers coming back for more.

Retaining customers is cheaper than acquiring new ones, while keeping more of them over time can deliver a disproportionately large boost to profits. One study suggests that increasing customer retention by 5% can increase profits by as much as 25%.

Many factors feed into customer retention. Great customer service is a given. If things do go wrong, a timely and appropriate response from a customer care team can lead to higher retention and advocacy rates than if everything has been hunky-dory from start to finish.

But perhaps even more effective is personalisation. More than half of customers (56%) in one study said they stay loyal to brands that 'get them'.

Personalisation in retail is a paradox. To succeed, retailers must personalise their offerings in a huge range of ways – and for every customer. Without the help of technology, providing that individual service in a cost-effective and time-efficient manner just isn't possible for any but the smallest boutique brands.

That's where artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) come in.

"As we've grown as a business, we now have enough data so that, rather than having a person do this manually, which is sub-optimal, time-consuming and lagging in many cases, we started to apply ML algorithms to give people personalised experiences," explains Joe Tinston, chief product officer at online florist Bloom & Wild.

As Bloom & Wild is primarily a gifting service, those personalised experiences can be incredibly complex, Tinston says. The company must cater to at least two different customer types simultaneously: the gifter and the giftee. "We can use a variety of user and transactional data to provide the most relevant recommendations," he explains.

This becomes more complicated as the company looks to expand its product range beyond flowers into other gift types. Tinston admits this is still in quite an exploratory phase, but he would challenge anyone to deny that AI personalisation is an evolving journey.

It's easy to see how you could tweak bouquets for personalisation at scale but it isn't as obvious when it comes to trousers. That is, until Spoke turned up.

The brainchild of entrepreneur and CEO Ben Farren, Spoke aims to tackle the problem of ill-fitting men's trousers by offering a bespoke experience to thousands of customers at once. "Fit is not rocket science," Farren says. "You need more sizes. At Spoke, we have 400 sizes to order – but that creates a new problem: how do you navigate a customer to his perfect size across a range that big?"

The answer? Data and AI. The company's 'fit finder' app asks a range of questions, from height and weight to how tight the customer likes to wear their watch strap. "The beauty of ecommerce is that you have this incredibly rich fire hydrant of data coming at you in terms of every single customer interaction," Farren says.

By bringing all the data sources together – website interactions and first-party data which has been input by the customer – the company can accurately predict a customer's best size by running an ML algorithm.

> AI helps us identify the information and services that will influence the customer's decision today and tomorrow

Farren says the figures speak for themselves, with 20% of new orders at Spoke repeating within 30 days, rising to more than 50% in the first year. Of the first customers recruited when the company started in 2016, many are still coming back. "When men find their fit, they are incredibly brand loyal," he says.

Of course, it must make financial sense to maintain a stock of semi-bespoke sizes. Farren says the company can keep customer options high and costs low, primarily through centralising inventory in a single warehouse – ideal from an ecommerce perspective – and personalising at the last mile.

"We finish the trousers off in our workshop in Yorkshire, so that little bit of agility and flexibility in the last mile helps us get to a bunch of additional sizes," he notes.

Many customers prefer to inspect a physical product before buying, which they can't do online. Personalisation could bridge that gap.

67%

of consumers say that relevant, personalised content increases their trust in a brand

73%

say that a bad personalised experience decreases their trust in a brand



Adobe, 2022



Online florist Bloom & Wild uses AI to personalise the customer experience

Spoke menswear has a 'fit finder' app to help customers order the right size; Spoke CEO Ben Farren (below)







> The beauty of ecommerce is that you have an incredibly rich fire hydrant of data coming at you in terms of every single customer interaction

"When someone shops in the digital world, in the absence of being able to touch and feel the product, they need added reassurance and confidence to complete the purchase," says Francesca Contardo, ecommerce director at jewellery maker Pandora. "AI helps us identify the information and services that will influence the customer's decision today and tomorrow, depending on their changing needs."

This experience extends beyond the product itself, with Contardo citing payment options or delivery services as 'added value' extras that personalisation can reach. The company is at the beginning of its AI personalisation journey, but it has already seen benefits.

"Decision-making in organisations can be lengthy and is not always backed up by data. That's where AI adds a layer of efficiency. It has helped us significantly in streamlining processes and, ultimately, maximising traffic to drive conversion," she comments.

Tinston hasn't solved the company's customer retention question completely just by implementing AI personalisation. "Our overall business objective is building longer-term loyalty, but that takes a long time to measure, particularly in a low-frequency business like flowers. We need a proxy metric, something we think is going to drive longer-term retention."

The range of information Tinston models is staggering, from purchase frequency to transactional data and detailed feedback on how ranges are performing for different customer segments. Encouraging customers to use a 'save the occasion' facility is also helping to improve the company's models.

Tinston favours third-party tools such as Chatter. This natural language processing-based feedback tool identifies themes within customer feedback to provide insights that inform what Bloom & Wild does as a business.

"There's the extent to which you want to automate things versus how much automation adds value to the customer," he says. "For example, lots of people email fairly common queries to our customer delight team, and we could start to use the historic responses our agents have sent to automate at the first point of contact, before becoming more personal later. It's an interesting area for us to explore in the future."

For Farren, such tweaks are vital in the dog-eat-dog world of direct-to-consumer retail. People once thought Facebook and Google had upended the economics of consumer brands, he says, when the truth is that "what we get back from skipping retail overheads, we pay to Facebook and Google in spades".

The only way to make direct-to-consumer work in the long term is to build real lifetime value, offsetting the cost of acquiring new customers through providers like Meta, he says, "and by building true customer loyalty, expressed in a continuous revenue stream from those guys who have been around for years. Personalisation is a great example of something which makes that happen."

Commercial feature

Q&A

Brands ignore the post-purchase experience at their peril



The post-purchase customer experience is being ignored by many retail ecommerce brands and needs a major rethink, says **Rebecca Griffiths**, CEO and founder of Primis

Q What are the challenges that customers and brands face post-purchase?

A Customers can spend ages agonising over buying a product, browsing glossy and well-funded websites, yet once they've clicked purchase, everything thereafter can seem like an afterthought. From a non-personalised thank you to few updates on dispatch, and a generic communication from the courier, the post-purchase experience is often disappointing. Yet this is the most crucial and most emotional part of the sales cycle. Not knowing when the product will arrive, if it will be delivered safely or whether the retailer is processing the purchase correctly can cause customer anxiety. This needs to change.

Q Why is the post-purchase customer experience often poor?

A The final mile is still the most underinvested part of the customer journey, often because it is sub-contracted out to a third-party logistics firm or couriers with little visibility, control and few data insights. The massive shift to online purchasing during the pandemic has seen brands beef up their web presence yet neglect the final mile as an afterthought. There is also a yawning gap between the customer experience that retailers offer in-store, and on their ecommerce website and what they offer after you've clicked buy online. This is a woefully neglected opportunity to significantly increase customer loyalty.

91%

of consumers say they are more likely to shop with brands that provide offers and recommendations that are relevant to them

Accenture, 2019

65%

of all consumers find a positive experience with a brand to be more influential than great advertising

PwC, 2019

Q Are there other factors driving change?

A Customer expectations have skyrocketed, because we all know what excellent looks like. The brands that get the final-mile right communicate with the consumer in real time on the digital platform of their choice, and that provide proactive communications relating to where their item is in the delivery network – all while remaining 'on brand' – will win. Consumers want a seamless connection to the brand they made the purchase from, not clunky engagement with a third party. WISMO calls ('Where is my order?') are a huge cost for brands, up to £6 a call. These need to be reduced and the whole experience made flawless. Most brands focus on the top of the funnel, and fulfilment partners are squarely interested in delivery only – so there's a gap in between.

Q What are the benefits if brands get the post-purchase experience right?

A Customer acquisition costs are spiralling. Brands cannot afford to lose customers at any point in the journey, and with the right partner they don't have to. Post-purchase is a crucial time for engagement with brands; it is often the make-or-break time to secure a truly loyal customer or lose them forever. Traditional options for brands include offering discounts on repeat orders or communicating new site-wide sales. These traditional marketing emails have an average open rate of 14%, whereas transactional emails on average have an open rate of up to 80%, so if ecommerce brands get their post-purchase communications right and leverage these transactional emails successfully, buying will increase, average order values will go up and the customer lifecycle can be extended.

Q What should retail brands be doing now?

A Brands need to focus on getting their end-to-end customer experience right. However, it is known that due to an increase in shopping options, customer loyalty is on the ebb, so it's hugely important to make sure customers are treated like kings or queens throughout all customer touch points. The experience is a major determinant in a customer's decision to maintain loyalty with a brand. In fact, the post-purchase arena is a make-or-break factor for ecommerce brands.

Q What does the future hold?

A Eventually, competitive brands will seamlessly join up the dots between supply chain, final mile, customer service, ecommerce and marketing. Yes, brands will continue to use couriers and third parties, but they will take back control of the whole customer experience end-to-end. This is essential. It can also save brands money. This is what Primis is helping brands with. For many it's an education.

Deliver multi-touch point customer experiences with primis.cx

PRIMIS

PHYSICAL STORES

Tough times: five key challenges for bricks and mortar

With consumer spending declining, 2023 looks set to be a tough year for retail. Here are five key issues for brick-and-mortar businesses in the coming months

Jonathan Weinberg

For bricks-and-mortar retailers, the coming year could prove tricky to navigate.

A significant number are already upending their businesses. A recent survey of 500 UK retailers by Dutch payment company Adyen showed that 46% are re-evaluating their strategies for physical stores. Many reported that they're moving out of business parks and shopping centres to be closer to residential areas. And critically, asked whether physical stores would remain important to their business post-pandemic, 27% said they would not.

But there seems to be enduring appeal for the format. Adyen also spoke to 2,000 UK consumers and discovered that nearly half (49%) still prefer to shop at a physical store, particularly where technology is being used to improve the customer experience.

As bricks-and-mortar retailers try to maintain a lean and effective physical presence over the tricky 12 months ahead, here are five key challenges they must navigate if they want to survive.



Jean-Luc Ichard via iStock

Using stores as ecommerce hubs

As the largest sporting goods retailer in the world, with almost 1,670 stores in 60 countries and regions, Decathlon understands the significance of bricks-and-mortar retail. For Oksana Dambrauskaite, Decathlon UK's ecommerce operations leader, the key task ahead is finding new ways for the physical and online presence to coexist.

Click and collect and in-store returns offer the "perfect balance of encouraging customers to visit our stores while building on the convenience of online shopping", she says. But she warns that such integration can be disjointed if designed around manual processes for in-store staff. This increases queuing time, frustrates customers and prevents additional browsing.

To modernise the customer experience, Decathlon has focused on streamlining the click-and-collect and returns processes. It uses smart parcel lockers from Parcel Pending by Quadient as a safe and secure way for customers to pick up or return items, Dambrauskaite says.

"The lockers are automated, only open to customers with the right passcode and can record who left or took an item," she says. "So far, 98% of customers who used the lockers were satisfied, and our security and accessibility have improved significantly."

40%

of transactions are click-and-collect, among retailers that offer it

41%

of physical stores in the UK are used as ecommerce hubs

Barclays, 2022



Ceri Breeze via iStock

Soaring rents and leasehold changes

Commercial landlords have a huge role to play within bricks-and-mortar retail. Economic headwinds could see rents increase, prompt contract changes (with rent being paid monthly rather than quarterly, for instance), or force adaptations to meet incoming regulations.

Paul Davies is head of commercial property at solicitors Harper James. He thinks that in 2023, retailers that proactively manage their leasehold interests will "fare far better than those who are less savvy".

This could involve some difficult but necessary conversations. "Rents based on turnover are starting to creep in more often as landlords find that headline rents are becoming challenging for retailers," he says.

Davies also predicts that retail tenants will more often request the power to share spaces (sub-let) more easily, without needing complex and formal landlord consent. This would best fit their business models, without needing permission for elements such as alterations and signage. "Adapting to changing consumer demand means greater flexibility will be desirable and should be considered in advance," Davies advises.

What's more, new regulations are on the horizon as part of the government's target of net zero by 2050. "Those looking to renew or take on a new lease could find shrewd landlords including clauses which pass on the cost of compliance to tenants," Davies warns.



Gorodenkoff via iStock

Expansion pressures

As big-name retailers face issues with keeping their bricks-and-mortar stores open, some SMEs face the opposite struggle. Kirsty Gale, founder of prom dress company Red Carpet Ready, wants to expand by adding more showrooms to the five she currently operates. The company is bricks-and-mortar only, and Gale wants to add a wholesale arm.

But she cites a series of physical retail challenges holding back this expansion. Not being able to recruit enough people, energy prices, and supply chain and logistics issues.

Gale's success over the past nine years has been built on in-person shopping experiences for customers. "We are a shopping destination which is open seven days a week," she explains. She believes the value of bricks and mortar lies in bringing "customer service and a unique customer experience to the forefront… no online business can compete with that."

Providing that level of personalised service in difficult times will rely on some savvy business practices, particularly as prices increase everywhere. "As a proactive business owner, it's forcing me to analyse every aspect of my supply chain," Gale says. "Be sharp in identifying opportunities, look at better ways of buying your product, who to buy from and what country to buy from, to keep prices down."

Maximising inventory without overburdening cashflow

Bricks-and-mortar retailers must pay more attention to ensuring the right stock is in the right place at the right time, says Stuart Higgins, a former head of logistics at Halfords. This must be achieved without excess inventory, he says, which diminishes working capital.

Higgins is now a partner at independent management consultancy BearingPoint. He says retailers are "having to take a punt" on which stock will sell where and in what quantities, because of the need to bring large, seasonal buys into the business before a season launch. This can be countered by better forecasting, he says. There can be differing rates of sale across stores, he says, some in line with forecast but most outside it. This leads to significant issues with items going out of stock and lost sales in parts of the retail estate. Conversely, in other stores there are high levels of overstocking that require markdowns at discounts of 30% to 70%.

"The answer is turning the conventional seasonal replenishment model on its head. Initial allocations should cover display stock and only two or three weeks of forward sales," he says. "This allows stores to fulfil the initial sales demand but then it requires stock to be replenished rapidly to replace sold stock. This ensures stock is directed to stores that are actually selling, while avoiding overstocking in those that are not."



4

Kim Willems via iStock

Balancing sustainability and value-based purchase habits

According to a global study of nearly 13,000 consumers by Mood Media, people want more sustainable products and practices in their shopping journeys.

The offer of a repair service was the top choice that would positively influence any decision to visit a physical store, chosen by 63% of consumers. What's more, 55% of UK consumers said they would be more likely to visit a store which provided a recycling point for used packaging or clothing.

This chimes with Elissa Quinby, a former Amazon product manager who is now senior director of retail marketing at analytics company Quantum Metric. She comments that the ever-increasing focus on the environment, combined with the current economic climate, means that many consumers are moving away from unsustainable products and practices.

"Shoppers, especially those who are Gen Z, are voting with their money," she says. "Rather than buying on a whim, this influential group of consumers wants to support brands that align with their values."

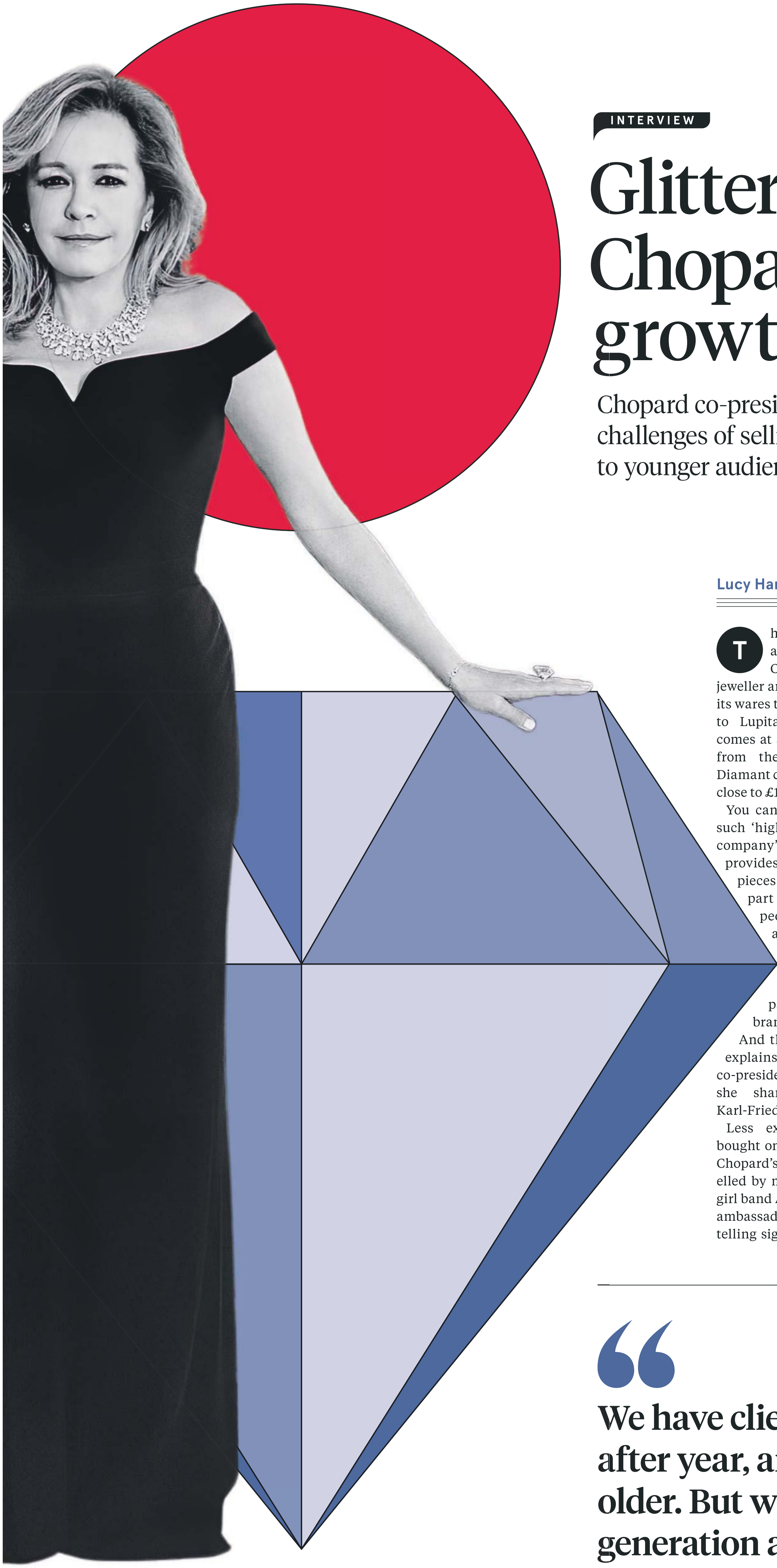
This means retailers must not just provide high-quality goods at the best price, but also offer a knockout customer experience. "Mission-driven brands with commitments to social issues like sustainability will undoubtedly win." ●



5

Oksana Kalinina via iStock





INTERVIEW

Glittering opportunity: Chopard balances growth with quality

Chopard co-president **Caroline Scheufele** outlines the challenges of selling high-end jewellery online, appealing to younger audiences and navigating geopolitical turmoil

Lucy Handley

Think of giant diamonds and you might well think of Chopard, the Swiss luxury jeweller and watchmaker that lends its wares to stars from Julia Roberts to Lupita Nyong'o. That cachet comes at a price: a pair of earrings from the Chopard L'Heure Du Diamant collection will set you back close to £100,000.

You can browse – but not buy – such 'high' jewellery items on the company's website, where Chopard provides plenty of content on its pieces and their origins. It is all part of an effort to drive people towards its bricks-and-mortar stores.

"A lot of people go online to collect all the information and compare products from one brand versus another brand. And then they go to the shop," explains Caroline Scheufele, co-president of the company, a title she shares with her brother Karl-Friedrich.

Less expensive items can be bought online, such as pieces from Chopard's Happy collection, modelled by members of South Korean girl band Aespa, who became brand ambassadors in September. It's a telling sign of the quandary facing Chopard and many other luxury brands: how to maintain sales among an older clientele while attracting younger generations in the face of stiff competition.

Plenty of smaller jewellers such as Catbird have started leaning on TikTok and Instagram to reach younger audiences, while Gucci Vault, the luxury giant's "experimental" online shop, focuses on selling more unusual pieces from other designers such as Bleue Burnham, which recently created a collection made from recycled gold and silver.

In this vein, Scheufele says that Chopard's My Happy Hearts collection, which features smaller diamonds and simple gold bangles and pendants and starts at around £1,600 for a ring, is popular with younger women. In September, Chopard launched a Snapchat filter for the collection, allowing customers in Europe, the Middle East and the US to virtually try on items before buying them.

"We have clients who come back year after year, and they grow with us as they get older. But we also have to address the younger generation and see what they like and [Snapchat] is what they look at," Scheufele says. "They don't look at,

> We have clients who always come back year after year, and they grow with us as they get older. But we also have to address the younger generation and see what they like

unfortunately, magazines anymore. Maybe they watch TV series, so if you do product placement within a series, that is also very effective," she explains.

When Scheufele was approached by stylists working with Jennifer Aniston on Apple TV+'s *The Morning Show*, she "naturally" said yes to their request for Aniston's character to wear watches from Chopard's LUC collection, she told *The Hollywood Reporter* in 2019. Chopard also put Ana de Armas in diamond earrings, necklace and bracelet for 2021's *No Time to Die* and hired the actress to promote its Golden Hearts collection to coincide with the film's release.

It's all part of a canny marketing strategy that has helped carry the brand into the 21st century.

Chopard was founded by Swiss watchmaker Louis-Ulysse Chopard in 1860. Scheufele's parents Karl and Karin bought the company in 1963, with both still active in the firm. Scheufele herself has worked in the business for 35 years, designing and launching its first pieces of jewellery at a time when Chopard only made watches.

When she was 20 years old, her father sent her to Japan for a store opening. "He gave me a title: 'You're the vice-president,'" she said during a panel discussion on equality at the Global Citizen Forum, a conference held in the United Arab Emirates in November 2022.

The theme of the conference was human metamorphosis. Scheufele, it transpires, has long been an advocate of change at Chopard. She redesigned the Cannes Film Festival's Palme D'Or award in 1998, and Chopard became an official partner of the event, putting it on a global stage for more than two decades.

Appointed co-president in 2001, Scheufele is also artistic director today, overseeing design as well as international expansion. The brand is now sold in bricks-and-mortar stores and concessions in more than 100 countries.

She says she is relieved the business is "very well spread" around the world. "Sometimes one country has an economic crisis – or, for example, we cannot work in Russia [because of its invasion of Ukraine], which is a big market. But America is doing really well this year, Europe has picked up a lot and the Middle East is booming," she adds.

China is also a large market for Chopard, with around 60 outlets. It's a place where online sales are accelerating, especially since the Covid-19 shutdowns of the past two years. "A country like China is so big and the cities are like countries there. Plus the younger generation there shop more online than the older generation," Scheufele says.

Globally, online retailing accounts for about 4% to 5% of Chopard's sales. But in China, the US and UK, ecommerce sales have roughly doubled this year, Scheufele adds.

Chopard started selling online via an 'e-boutique' in the US in 2012, while the UK followed in 2015. It launched a range on luxury website Net-A-Porter in 2017 and entered the Chinese ecommerce market in the same year, with a small shop on China's giant JD.com site.

> **Growing the business is one thing but maintaining it is another. You must not lose control over the quality**

75,000

The number of watches Chopard produces each year, plus the same again in items of jewellery



2.1 million

people follow Chopard on Instagram

Chopard, 2022

In 2021, Scheufele joined JD.com's board. This gave her "another perspective" on ecommerce, she says, noting the speed of trends in China as well as delivery innovations such as the use of drones.

While growth is desirable, keeping control over customers' experience is important, Scheufele says. "Growing is one thing but maintaining it is another. In growing the business you must not lose control over the quality," she explains.

These days, an important part of quality is corporate responsibility. Chopard has a strict sourcing policy and is a member of the Responsible Jewellery Council, moves that Scheufele pushed for. "We managed to change the whole production so it's now all Fairmined gold or recycled gold. Either way, we have complete traceability," Scheufele says.

What does she see coming next for luxury brands? Along with more of a focus on sustainability and transparency, collaborations will continue to be important, she suggests. "You have the two visions of two different industries on one product, and that always gives you some sort of fresh wind," she says.

For instance, in November 2022 Chopard opened a New York City flagship store on Fifth Avenue selling a range of jewellery named Happy Butterfly, which Scheufele designed with Mariah Carey. A small, rose gold, heart-shaped pendant with three diamonds at the centre costs around $3,000 (£2,870), and the collection will only be available in the US at first because of production limitations, Scheufele says.

The singer approached Scheufele directly because she wanted to celebrate her song *All I Want For Christmas Is You* reaching diamond status. But the partnership was not designed as a corporate venture. "It wasn't planned, there were no marketing consultants in there." What a gem. ●

Commercial feature

Why outsourcing needs to be backed up by experience

Lots of retailers are looking to outsource their contact centres right now. But one size won't fit all, and cross-industry knowledge can be particularly valuable

As businesses look to undergo digital transformations, many will consider outsourcing their contact centre. But it's not just a way to lower costs or improve efficiencies. In fact, it could actually be a chance to get ahead of the competition.

The global contact centre outsourcing market is set to grow by $21.7bn in the four years to 2026, at a compound annual growth rate of 3%, according to a study by market research agency ReportLinker. And the retail sector is one of the fastest-growing buyers of contact centre services, as consumers move more of their spending online.

But as the market shifts, the challenge for outsourcers is being able to offer bespoke solutions to key business challenges, while still ensuring a seamless customer experience (CX) along every step of the customer journey.



Paula Constant, CEO at Woven

To do this, outsourcing specialists are having to gather experienced teams to come up with innovative and imaginative solutions to everyday business challenges.

With a background in telecoms Paula Constant, CEO at UK outsourcing business Woven, is not your typical outsourcing boss. And she has picked her diverse executive team – formerly in the retail, telecoms, utilities and financial services sectors – for exactly the same reasons.

"We're not that classic, old-school outsourcing business, which doesn't always have a great reputation," says Constant. "Our leadership team have all had jobs in the industries we serve, working on the other side of the fence. As a result, I think we've got a much better understanding of what companies really need, the way they're measured, and the pressures they are facing," she says.

As demand from businesses grows, outsourcers need to ensure they are equipped with the teams, skill sets and experience to adapt to this changing landscape. Cutting-edge technology is no longer enough; it needs to be coupled with complex strategic thinking in order to come up with bespoke solutions to everyday business problems.

And this includes understanding when technology can be used to support key business challenges, without harming the customer experience in the process.

Constant says she faced this challenge with one of Woven's clients, the cinema chain Vue. "Checking the balance of a gift card was one of the most common reasons for contact," she explains. "But this simple query was taking up valuable human resource, which was preventing Vue from solving really emotive, complex problems."

She explains that her team explored ways in which they could reduce customer contact through automation, while still maintaining the high-quality experience customers were used to. "The process was incredibly collaborative," she says. "We went through an iterative design process, attending workshops and exchanging ideas with Vue's digital team and gift card provider to create a customer-first automated solution, driving down contact and improving CX."

And this strategic thinking was only possible due to the cross-sector experience of her team members, who were able to see the business challenge through the eyes of the client, Constant explains. And the results speak for themselves. Contact volumes for this specific Vue query decreased from 23% to 3% at the point of switch-on.

As David Cameron, Vue's head of marketing, puts it: "The partnership has proven to deliver great customer journeys, through understanding the key contact needs and developing easy solutions that delight the customer by delivering easy to use and speedy responses."

Of course, as well as harnessing that vital cross-sector experience, outsourcing also needs to nurture a pipeline of new talent to ensure it continues to meet the unique business challenges of the future.

A focus on retention and growth is key here, as 80% of contact centre employees want to eventually move into another position within the company, including contact centre leadership, according to McKinsey's report Customer Care: The future talent factory.

In response to this, Constant says she has launched an academy for young people aged 16-plus at Woven. The aim is to build a pipeline of talented new contact centre workers and to support them as they move into the world of employment. This is in addition to delivering a training programme through music, art and drama and sport, which she says "looks at imaginative ways to connect what is important to our staff to what is important to our customers".

As digital transformations continue apace, the nature of contact centre work and the challenges around finding solutions to increasingly complex business problems require strategic thinking. And as the UK endures some particularly turbulent times, outsourcing needs to be backed up by experience to ensure it can rise to whatever challenges the months ahead hold.

For more information please visit www.wearewoven.com

WOVEN

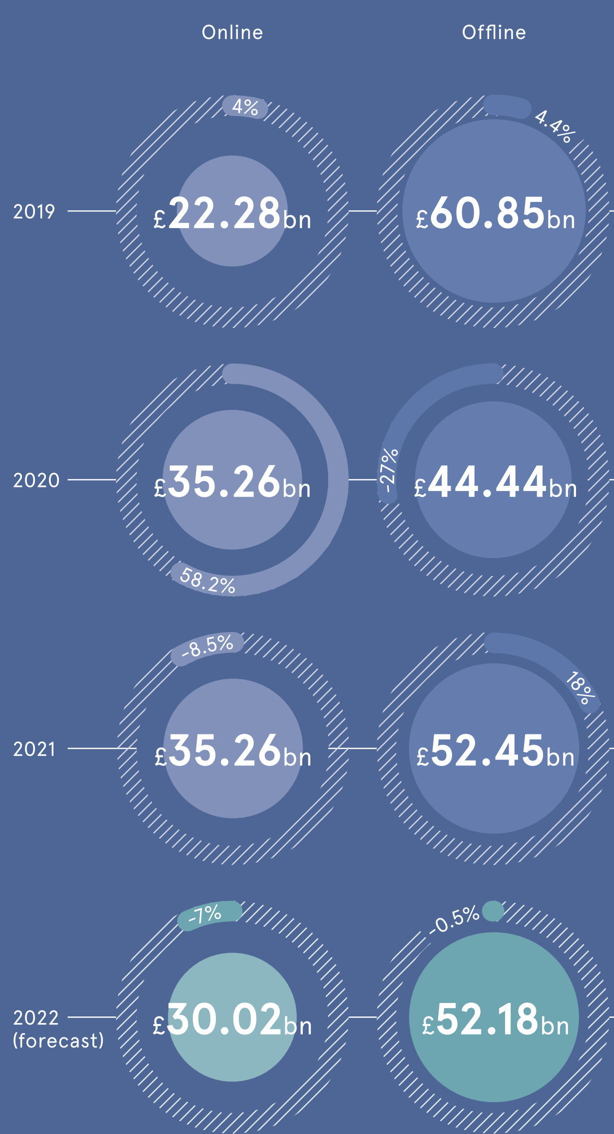
THE CHRISTMAS RETAIL CRAZE

The festive season is here and retailer
ready for the holiday rush. But while j
over half (52%) of UK consumers expe
celebrate the season as usual, about
will be feeling the pressure of rising c
this season. How will the cost-of-livin
impact consumers' Christmas festiviti
holiday shopping habits?

ONLINE OR IN-STORE?

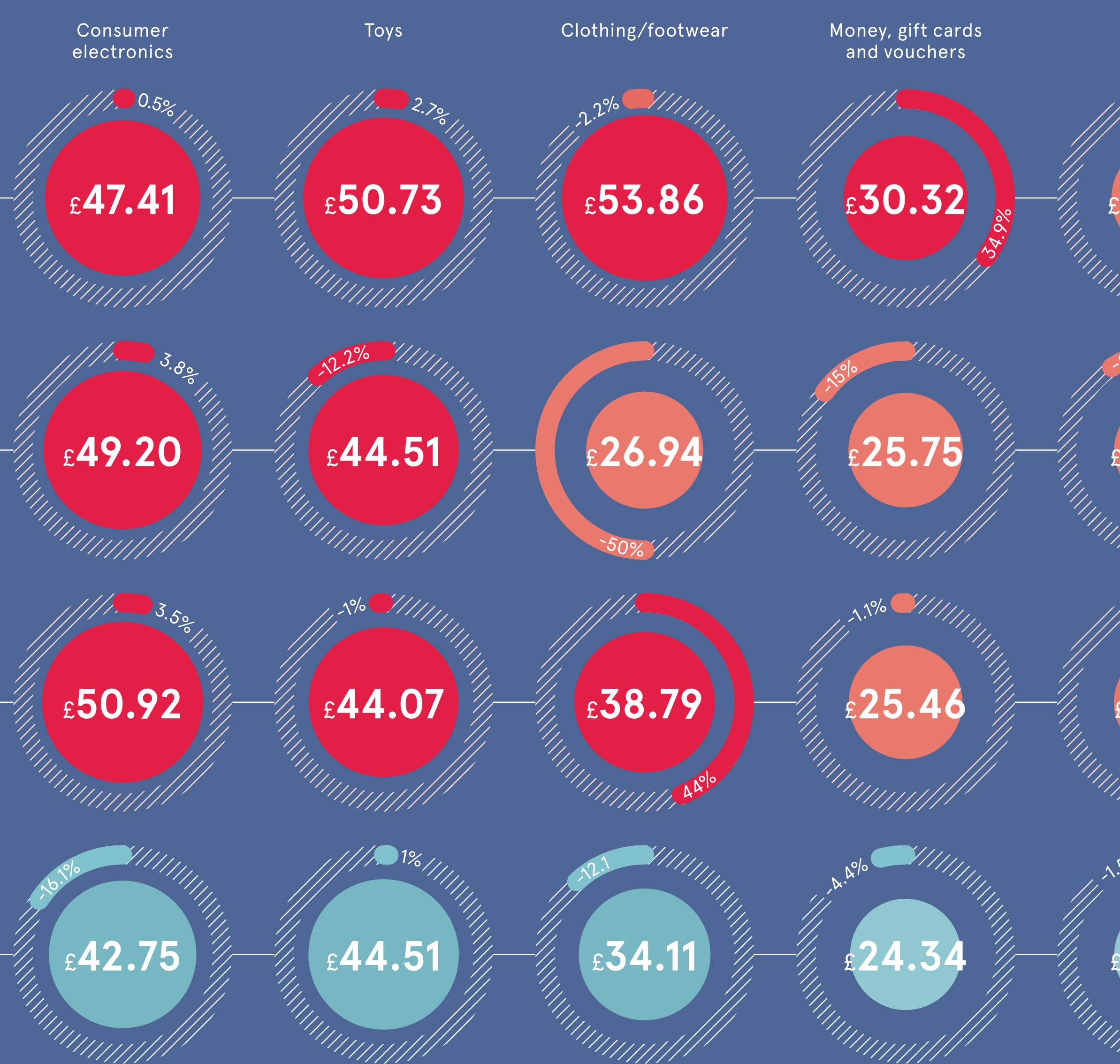
VoucherCodes.co.uk, 2022

Online and offline sales during Christmas in the UK, with year-on-year growth



CHRISTMAS SPENDING PER HEAD

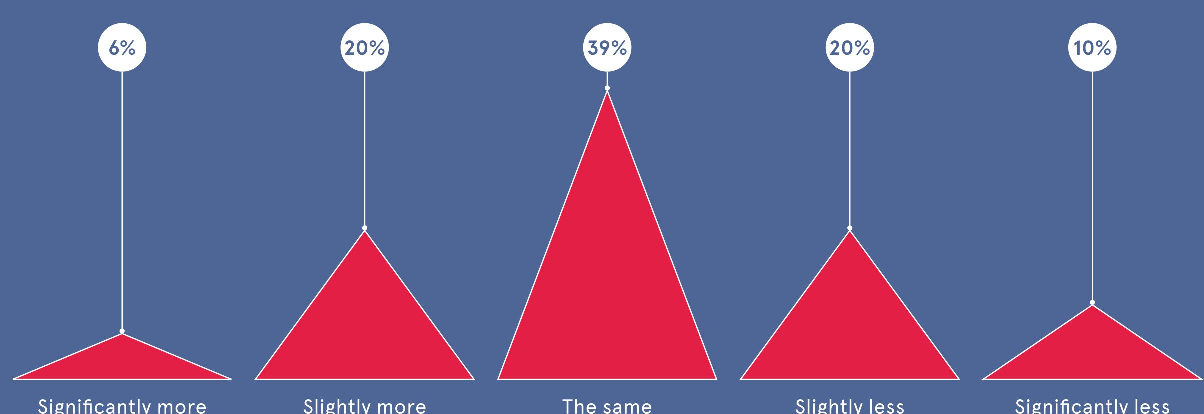
Average Christmas spending per head on gifts in the UK, by category



A SEASON OF EXCESS?

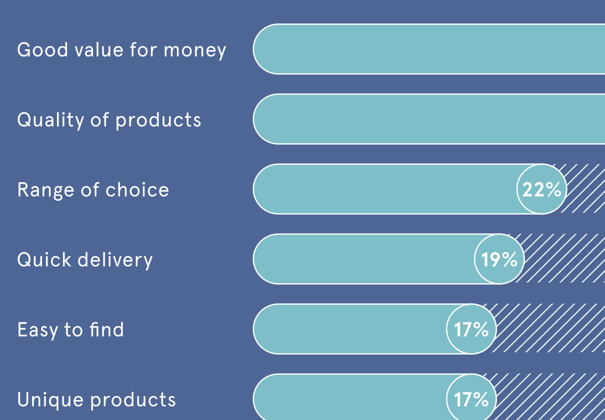
eBay, 2022

Compared to last year, how much are UK consumers planning to spend on Christmas gifts and celebrations in 2022?



CHRISTMAS SHOPPING PRIORITIES

Priorities for UK consumers when shopping for Christmas pre



s are
ust
ct to
9%
osts
g crisis
es and

52%

of UK consumers are optimistic that they'll be able to celebrate Christmas as usual this year, despite rising costs of living

eBay, 2022

49%

of UK consumers say they feel worse off financially this year than last year

VoucherCodes.co.uk, 2022

30%

plan to be more organised and start their shopping earlier to find better deals due to the impact of the rising cost of living

eBay, 2022

27%

are prepared to spend more for items that have better sustainability credentials

eBay, 2022

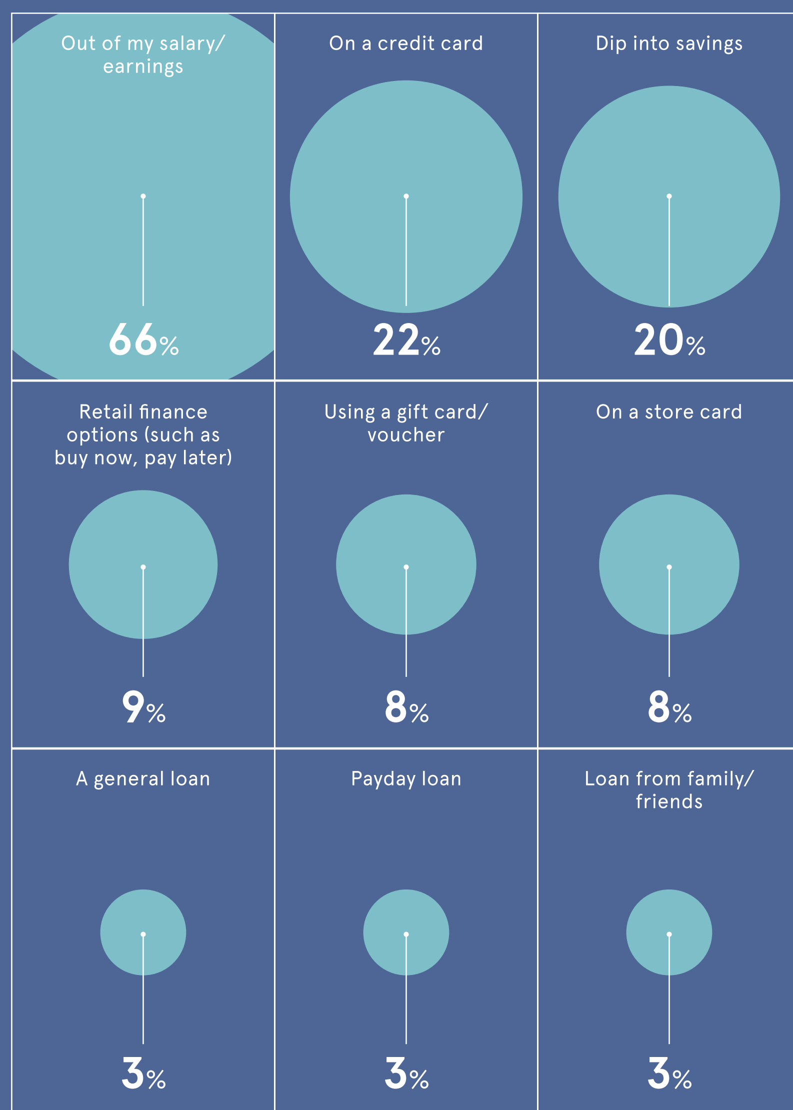
VoucherCodes.co.uk, 2022



PAYING FOR CHRISTMAS GIFTS

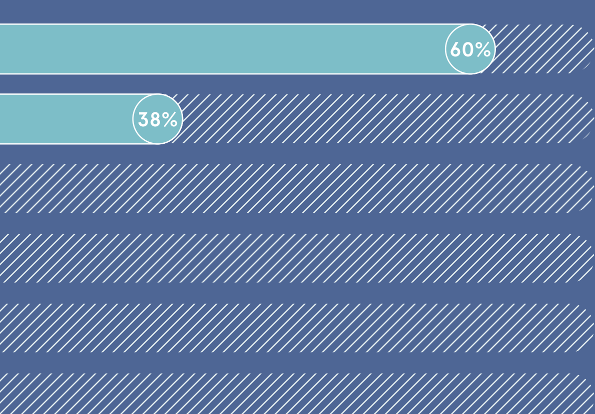
VoucherCodes.co.uk, 2022

How UK consumers will fund their Christmas shopping



eBay, 2022

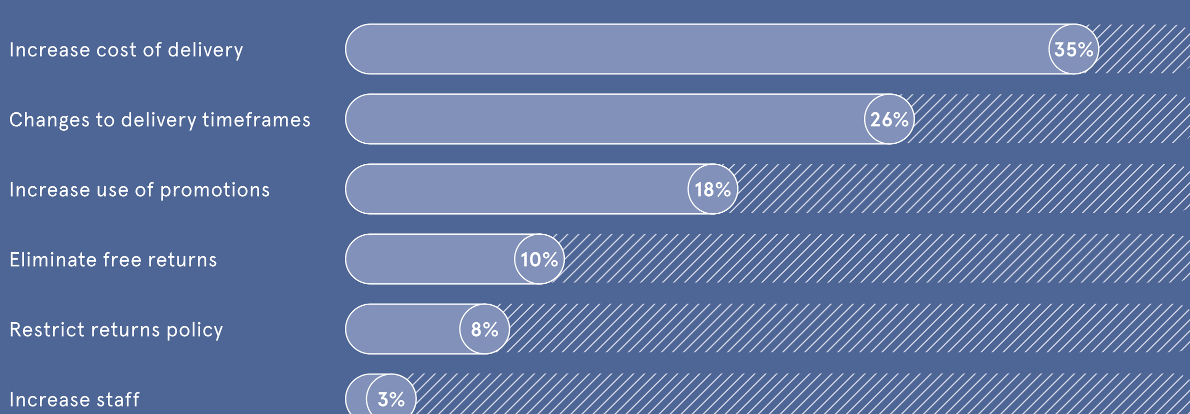
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RETAILERS' RESPONSE TO RISING COSTS

Metapack, 2022

Measures retailers plan to adopt to offset rising operating costs this peak season





REWARDS

Brands retool loyalty schemes for tougher times

Amid economic turmoil, companies are revamping their rewards programmes, seeking new ways to keep their best customers and lure new ones

Mark Walsh

The Starbucks loyalty programme boasts an impressive 28 million people. But while customers may have signed up to earn free coffee, the rewards now go well beyond a cup of Java.

In October, the coffee chain announced Reward Together, a new initiative which links its loyalty programme in the US with that of Delta Airlines. This allows members of both to earn reciprocal points when they spend at Starbucks or book with Delta: loyal customers of both brands can earn one mile with Delta per $1 spent at Starbucks.

That offer came hot on the heels of Odyssey, which is a Web3-powered expansion of the Starbucks loyalty programme that allows customers to earn and trade non-fungible tokens (NFTs). This, in turn, can lead to other benefits, including a trip to the company's coffee farm in Costa Rica.

As it updates its loyalty operation to retain and attract new customers, Starbucks isn't alone. Punishing inflation and broader economic uncertainty are leading restaurant chains and retailers from Chipotle to Marks & Spencer and Amazon to roll out novel loyalty schemes as a hedge against slowing business.

"There are a lot of issues happening that are causing brands to really look to identify who their loyal customers are – and to figure out how to keep them," says Mary Pilecki, a principal analyst focusing on customer loyalty at Forrester Research.

But there's a fine balance to be struck to avoid going too far or moving too fast.

With inflation soaring past 11% in the UK and the EU and above 8% in the US, cost savings are top of mind for consumers. That's where the financial benefits of loyalty programmes – things like discounts, loyalty points and reward certificates – can help people to stretch their budgets.

Pilecki advises retailers to ensure customers know their options for redeeming financial rewards linked to essential products that may have become more expensive. Such offers should be reserved for a company's best customers. "You should do it for your truly loyal customers, not just anybody who walks in the door," Pilecki comments.

Mexican food chain Chipotle is grappling to maintain customer loyalty – even as it raises prices amid growing costs. CEO Brian Niccol has signalled that the company is trying to better tailor its loyalty rewards towards different customer segments.

"Some of it is obviously the low-income consumer. Some of it is also what they're interested in, whether it's having more access digitally or having a different experience when coming into our restaurants," he said during a quarterly earnings call in October.

Using its database of customer information, the chain can communicate with customers "so that we're giving them relevant messaging that keeps them engaged with Chipotle", he added.

Indeed, analysing customer data on a more granular level may be a smart strategy for retailers. That's according to a recent study that analysed 15 months of data for 24,000 members of a subscription-based loyalty programme at a major retailer in Asia. The study, published in the *Journal of Marketing*, found that while customers on average spent twice as much after joining the programme, some contributed much more than others to that increase.

Such an understanding could help marketers better target prospects. So says Raghuram Iyengar, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School and a co-author of the study.

Of course, retailers should also be aware that in leaner times people are more likely to consider dropping costly subscription programmes, such as Amazon Prime, or switching brands for a cheaper option.

> **There are a lot of issues happening that are making brands work hard to identify who their loyal customers are – and figure out how they can keep them**

As such, experts emphasise that loyalty programmes should be more than purely transactional to make customers feel appreciated.

"It has to be about more than just points and discounts at the point of purchase," comments Jason Rzutkiewicz, founder of consultancy Get Transformative Advisory Services. That might mean offering perks such as exclusive product offers, early access to promotions or features such as added convenience.

Marks & Spencer seemed to heed that message when it relaunched its Sparks loyalty scheme in 2020. This brought a focus on personalised offers and the opportunity to receive surprise small gifts or a random free shopping trip, among other benefits.

In October, the retailer said Sparks had since doubled in size to 16 million members, while it also announced the programme's rollout internationally. That came as part of a £200m push from Marks & Spencer to upgrade its digital offering, including the M&S app and new backend tech.

Other companies are following suit. A survey of CMOs conducted by Forrester earlier this year showed that 35% of brands had recently revamped their loyalty schemes and 29% planned to do so in the next 12 months.

Even retailers with well-established programmes are refreshing their offerings. Amazon, for instance, unveiled Buy with Prime in April, which allows Amazon Prime members to get the same features, including free shipping and returns, when they shop at third-party merchants using Amazon's fulfilment network.

Similarly, the Starbucks Reward Together programme is set to expand through alliances with other brands.

These initiatives highlight retailers' efforts to offer a wider range of rewards. Still, Pilecki cautions against making underlying changes too quickly or without alerting customers in advance.

She points to Dunkin' Donuts' loyalty programme revamp this autumn, which gave customers new ways to use their rewards points, including on food besides drinks. But a social media backlash erupted over a structural change in the programme which requires more points to redeem rewards.

To avoid that scenario, Pilecki advises that brands first survey customers for their views on the loyalty programme. Transparency around any changes – especially if they involve raising the 'price' of rewards – and being flexible regarding customer feedback are also key.

> Transparency around any changes – especially if they involve raising the 'price' of rewards – is key

In their eagerness to earn loyalty, brands may understandably be inclined to grasp at pop culture trends. The Starbucks Odyssey programme, for instance, is centred on NFT technology; it has attracted criticism for venturing too far from its core proposition of giving customers the virtual equivalent of a punch card.

Mohanbir Sawhney, a professor of marketing at the Kellogg School of Management, wrote of Odyssey: "Starbucks should remind itself why its rewards programme was so successful. The job it did for customers was clear and compelling: 'Give me free stuff when I buy more from you.'"

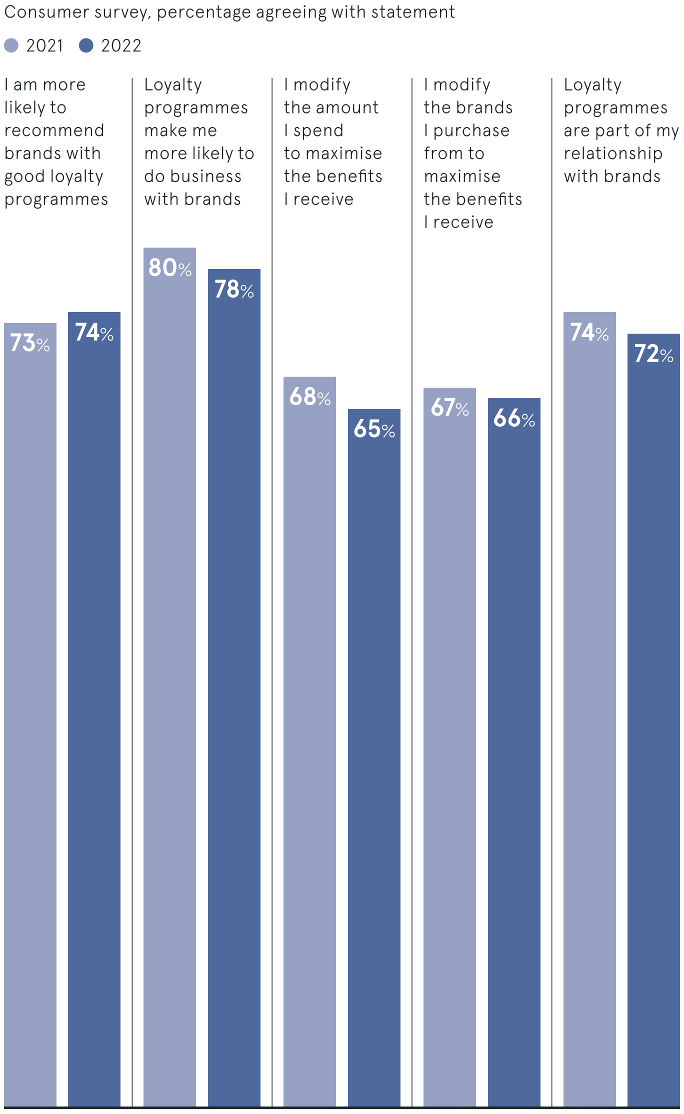
Starbucks describes Odyssey as its "next big innovation in loyalty" and a digital extension of its founding concept as a third place for people to meet outside work and home. The company said in November that it has seen unprecedented interest in the new initiative but declined to say how many customers have joined its online waitlist.

A similar critique might apply to Chipotle's embrace of cryptocurrency, both as an accepted form of payment and in relation to crypto-focused promotions that require enrolment in the chain's loyalty programme. Chipotle says it views crypto as a way to appeal to millennial and Gen-Z consumers.

But as times get tougher, brands may well find that a back-to-basics approach to customer loyalty is of more use to them than forays into the metaverse.

TO RETAIN COST-SENSITIVE CUSTOMERS, LOYALTY PROGRAMMES WILL NEED TO WORK HARDER THAN EVER

Consumer survey, percentage agreeing with statement



Bond Brand Loyalty, 2022

Commercial feature

Q&A

How relationships informed by data are changing the digital retail shelf

The growth of ecommerce has created huge opportunities, but it also presents unique challenges in the buying process. **Peter Laughton**, founder and CEO of retailer relationship management specialist eebz, says AI analytics combined with traditional sales skills can help optimise those valuable interactions



Q What challenges have emerged with the growth of ecommerce?

A We've experienced a retail revolution, accelerated by COVID-19, thanks to the proliferation of online-only retailers and micro-retailers, and bricks-and-mortar stores going online. It has all resulted in a massive profusion of product choice for consumers.

It's tremendously exciting, but huge operational complexities have been introduced. Retailers need to create and manage new or improved websites that are required to carry more and more stock. In addition, product lifecycles are much shorter as both retailers and brands strive to keep up with consumer trends.

In order to cope, retailers are investing huge sums of money at a time when margins are under extreme pressure. Economies must be found elsewhere. One way they can do this is by improving the productivity and efficiency of their buying process.

Q Are current product selling and buying processes fit for online?

A Amazon UK has just several hundred buyers, with thousands of salespeople at brands or distributors trying to sell to them.

Conversely, 10 years ago, a brand's key account manager may have had 10 retailer clients and 100 products to sell in. Now they have 30 retailer clients and 500 products to deal with.

The increase in the workload has led the sales process to become emotionally-led rather than data-led. Important decisions worth millions of pounds are being made on gut instinct.

> Online stores actually have less space than physical stores

The art of merchandising through retail relationship building – so crucial in the brick-and-mortar world – has been lost. We need to re-learn and re-purpose these selling and relationship soft skills for the online world.

Q How is eebz's technology helping brands and retailers automate and adapt?

A Our key customers are brand sales teams and their distributors selling to retailers. We track more than 1,300 retailer websites and 100 marketplaces worldwide every day, gathering data across a wide range of digital shelf KPIs, surfacing the critical product and store information they need to make informed decisions about ecommerce strategies – and the account management tools to implement them.

We call the platform Retailer Relationship Management (RRM) and, broadly speaking, we focus on discoverability and conversion KPIs. In the real world, that means we can use AI to track whether a brand's product is actually available to buy on a given retailer's website. If it's out of stock, RRM's dashboard will tell the sales team to get stock moving so they can sell some more.

RRM can also help brands get their products ranked at the top of retailer search engine results and product landing pages. This is hugely important because online stores actually have less space than physical stores. If a product isn't listed on the first or second page, it likely won't be seen or bought.

Combine all of that with real-time product price tracking and listing content optimisation, and suddenly both brand and retailer have the actionable information they need to deepen their relationship and sell more.

Q What are the benefits to the consumer?

A Brands and retailers want consumers to find the products they are looking for as fast as possible. Digital shelf analytics can make that easier by ensuring partners are in lockstep when it comes to discoverability and conversion goals. There's also a wider consideration here, in that a more efficient selling and buying process, and less product waste as a result, could lead to lower prices. Both of which we as consumers are more sensitive to now than ever before.

Q How do you see the ecommerce buying process developing in the future?

A Given that it's in a brand's interest to get their products listed as high as possible on online store pages, then it's not inconceivable they could in future buy that space from the retailer. That commercial real estate will become more useful than TV and display advertising.

For more information please visit eebz.com or contact info@eebz.com

eebz

SOCIAL MEDIA

From hashtags to price tags

Social commerce is proving a hugely effective way for businesses to engage directly with consumers online and get them buying, but the basics of retail marketing still apply here

Simon Brooke

If you want to know why social commerce is grabbing the attention of brands and retailers worldwide, consider the following: in 12 hours on 20 October 2021, one of China's most successful live streamers, Li Jiaqi – known as the Lipstick King – sold products worth ¥10.7bn (£1.2bn) on online shopping site Taobao.

Social commerce is all about selling products directly via social networks such as Instagram, TikTok and Twitter. Consumers get to see product demonstrations, have their queries answered 'on air' by the presenters and make purchases, all without having to leave their site of choice. This fast-emerging sales channel was worth $585bn (£483bn) last year, according to Grand View Research, which forecasts that the market will expand at a compound annual growth rate of 30.8% from 2022 to 2030.

Increasing numbers of British brands are grasping its potential to reach a wider audience. For instance, after Barbour adopted the in-app shopping features that Instagram started offering in the UK in 2018, its sales via the channel increased by 42%, with traffic to the luxury label's website from Instagram nearly doubling.

> **It's not enough to simply open shop windows on different social networks. You have to make an effort**

According to TikTok, this is "a new kind of shopping culture we call community commerce – that intersection of shopping, entertainment and community, where a single piece of content can quickly go viral and create demand globally. From hashtags like #AsSeenOnTikTok to #TikTokMadeMeBuyIt, there are over 29 billion views that speak to how real this behaviour is and how it's clearing the shelves for brands."

Indeed, the company points to research published last year indicating that 37% of TikTok users had bought an item that they'd discovered through the platform.

It's a powerful combination. On the TikTok Shop live channel, for instance, a make-up influencer called Nisrin has sold £10,000 of goods in one session to her 500,000 followers.

The platform says that its recent "summer sale event delivered over 267 million live views, illustrating how much appetite there is for this format – not just in general, but specifically in terms of commerce".

Over on YouTube, The United Stand, an unofficial channel for Manchester United fans, has sold a substantial number of t-shirts and hoodies to its 1.53 million subscribers. Mark Goldbridge, The United Stand's founder and presenter, believes that the social commerce model is the best way to achieve sales at a time when the high-street retail channel is already struggling badly and a recession is nigh.

"We've used YouTube to create the kind of content that matters most to the fans," he says. "Then, to take that passion a step further, we're looking for gaps in the market to engage and monetise the community we've built."

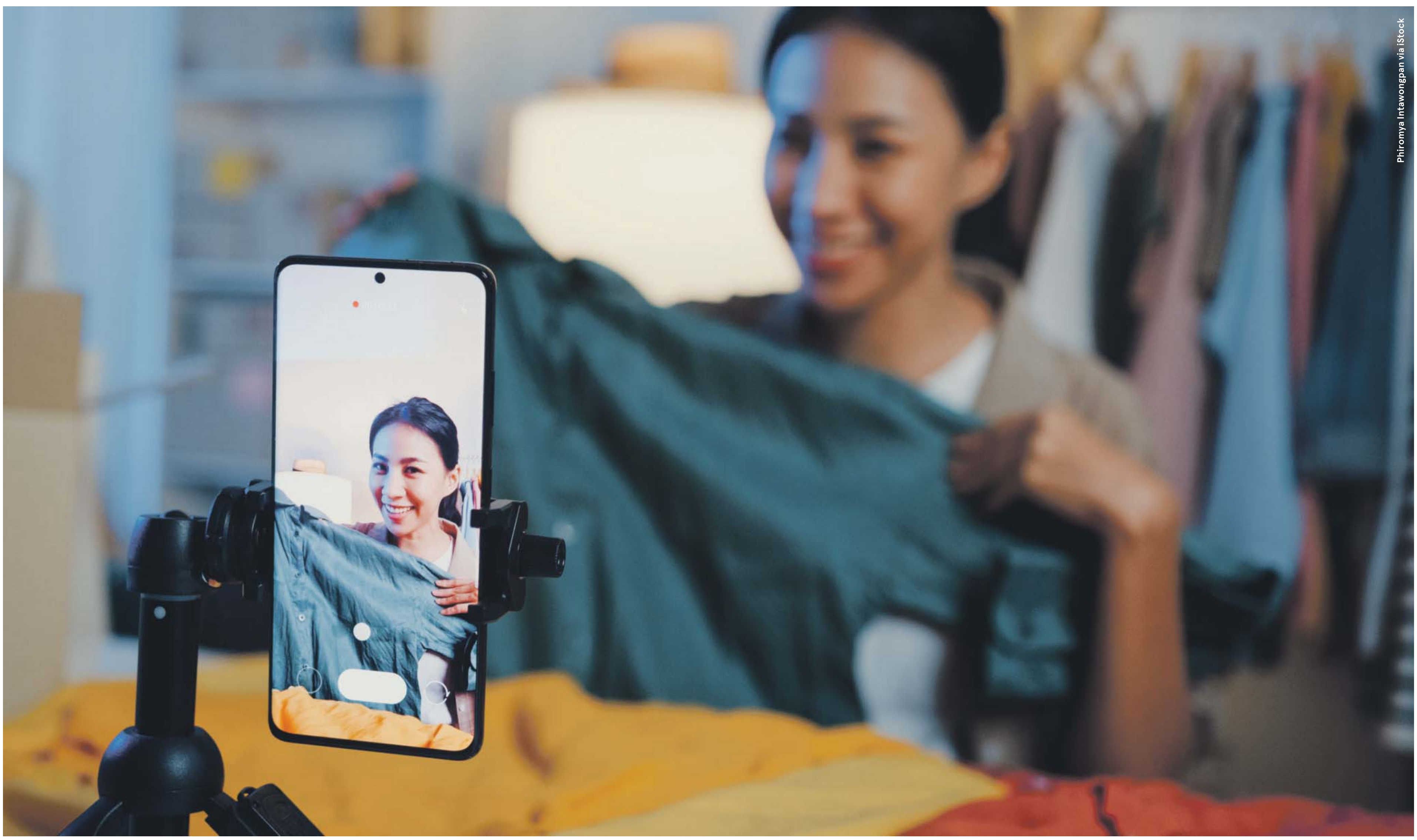
Another key to success with social commerce, particularly live streaming, is having an interesting tale to tell. That's the view of Simon Waterfall, MD and chief soda maker at soft drinks company Soda Folk.

"This is essential on TikTok," he says. "The platform tends to suit brands with stories to tell. We have compelling ones to tell about our origin, ingredients, flavour inspirations, charity work and even the people we feature on our packaging."

When brands include their founders as part of the narrative, it builds relationships with the online community and delivers measurable results, according to TikTok. It believes that consumers tend to see the founders as authentic experts in their fields.

Showcasing a broad range of content and activities is also an important part of getting the audience truly engaged with your brand, says Xavier Klein, UK head of performance at ecommerce consultancy Making Science.

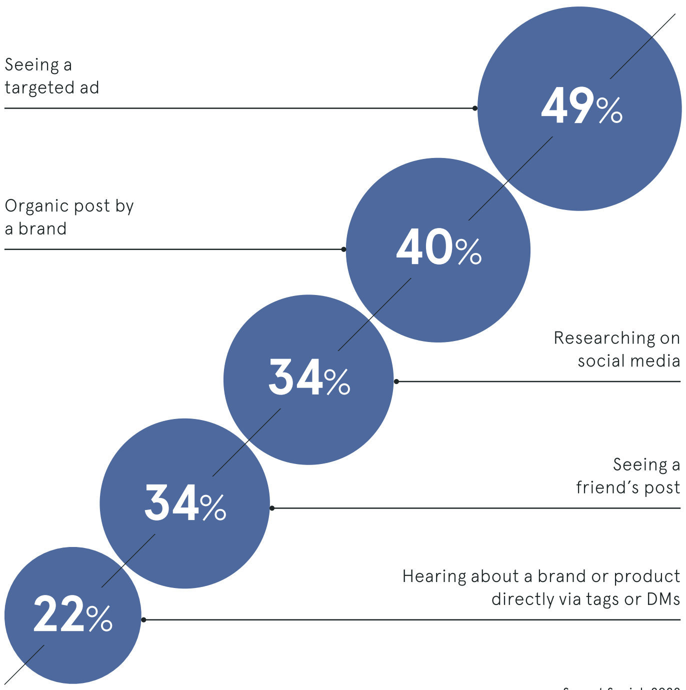
"This needs to incorporate creativity – such as audiovisual material that's attractive and coherent with the brand – to generate interest with



Phiromya Intawongpan via iStock

ALL HAIL THE TARGETED AD

Survey of social media users' common routes to purchases



Sprout Social, 2022

the target audience," he advises. "It's not enough to simply open shop windows on different social networks. You have to make an effort."

Pet food and accessories retailer Petco, for instance, has run a range of live shopping events on Facebook, mixing fashion, charity and, of course, cute animals.

The first such event, in April 2021, was called the Perfect Fit. Hosted by actress, influencer and pet owner Arielle Vandenberg, it featured a range of fashions, plus an appeal to audiences to adopt rescued dogs. Perfect Fit reached more than 986,000 people, exceeding Petco's target by 44%, and the total revenue from the sales it generated was more than twice the cost of holding the event.

Naturally, image counts for a lot on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. Homeware brand Piglet in Bed has found that the effect of well-chosen visual content is an important factor in social commerce.

"What's really cool about this channel is the way that one organic Instagram post, say, can affect every part of the marketing funnel," says Piglet in Bed's head of brand, Rhiannon Johns. "Consider an image of a bedroom featuring our bedding, for instance. If the photograph is well shot and features a beautiful, interesting, on-trend room where our products are front and centre, the algorithm will recognise that and place that image in front of a lot of people on the platform."

Xu Zhang, assistant professor of marketing at the London Business School, points out a key caveat that brands should consider before incorporating social commerce into their marketing strategies.

"If consumers engage with social media mainly to interact with other users, stay up to date with news and be entertained, it can be challenging for a brand to switch their mindset into purchasing mode," she says. "This mindset is expected to change gradually as the social platforms improve their shopping tools to create a seamless experience between content consumption and commerce."

> **"As social commerce grows, we're likely to see more platforms integrating checkout capabilities within their apps**

Olivier Buffon, head of international at Faire, a wholesale e-marketplace for independent retailers, agrees. "As social commerce grows, we're likely to see more platforms integrating checkout capabilities within their apps," he predicts.

That should create more opportunities for smaller retailers, according to Buffon, who adds: "Independent ones in particular are talented at bringing a sense of humanity to the shopping experience, which is hard to do in digital formats. Social commerce helps them to deliver this more personal touch online. It will be cool to see how these retailers figure out how to use all these tools at their disposal and innovate with them."

So, even though the potential of social commerce methods such as live streaming is breathtaking, it's clear that the channel still relies on the fundamentals of retail marketing: applying creativity to a solid underlying strategy. Brands and retailers simply need to put the right products in front of the right audiences, keep their promises and offer the best possible customer service. Easy, right?

Commercial feature

KEY DRIVERS OF POSITIVE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION FROM ONLINE SUPPORT



Citizenme, 2021

Customers are for life, not just for Christmas

Don't let all your hard work acquiring customers go to waste this festive season

There's a reason this is called the 'Golden Quarter'. The last three months of the calendar year represent nothing short of a shopping frenzy, as major festivals and shopping events collide and retailers battle for a share of the customer's wallet. And this year, while experts reckon there is more than $200bn (£169bn) on the table, that wallet looks like it might be an even tighter squeeze, with UK shoppers set to spend £4.7bn less in Q4 2022 than they did the year before.

It's too late to do anything about that now. Black Friday 2022 has already been and gone and there are only a scant couple of weeks until Christmas. Before you know it, 2023 will be upon us. What matters now is what happens next.

"If it's all going to plan, you're going to get lots of new customers at Christmas. If you can hold onto them and carry them forward into 2023 with repeat revenue, that's going to be critical to next year's success. It's vital you don't mess that up," warns Ray Nolan, CEO of ecommerce helpdesk provider eDesk.

> **"You need to have all the metrics, be able to see all the problem products in one place, wherever you're selling**

It's safe to say that while a cost-of-living squeeze means it looks as though less will be spent overall, there will be high expectations of the purchases that are made. With every penny counting, consumers will want to be sure that not a single one is wasted.

And so, come Christmas morning, when wrapping paper is torn off, gifts unboxed and gadgets just refuse to turn on – forget the elves, it's businesses' turn to be there with bells on.

It's all very well saying 'Be there when the customer needs you', but few companies have the capacity to scale up to meet a deluge of service enquiries at a moment's notice. So, how do you keep thousands of new customers happy (or make them less sad) when your customer care team is typically five or maybe 10 strong, at most?

"You need to have all the metrics, be able to see all the problem products in one place, wherever you're selling – whether that's Amazon, Shopify or Magento. Your team needs to be able to deal with it all from one place, consistently," says Nolan.

"Automation is also key," he adds, explaining that today's global marketplace means customer service agents don't just have to respond to large volumes of queries, they may well have to do it in multiple languages. "One London client of eDesk has three agents managing the whole of their European and US business, and they can manage Europe because of our auto-translation engine."

But still, investing in customer care can be something of an afterthought – which is a mistake. "It all starts on 25 December, whether they want to return something that doesn't fit or suit, or they can't get it to work or it has arrived broken. This is where those relationships are really won or lost," Nolan insists. "You've worked too hard to acquire those customers in those mad months in Q4, to go and lose them again right after."

How companies perceive the role of customer service in their business is critical to post-December success. Viewing it as a cost of doing business is missing the point. Not providing five-star aftercare in the current climate is an opportunity cost that's too big to bear. "The inevitable surge in support tickets is a golden opportunity to build brand loyalty really easily. It's all in the psychology," explains Nolan. "Sentiment analysis studies find that customer satisfaction towards a business where there has been a problem which was swiftly resolved is regularly higher than towards one where everything was plain sailing and there was nothing to write home about."

And 'writing home' is exactly what you want your customers to do. Reviews are the final piece of the puzzle, according to eDesk. "If you typically get 100 sales a day and suddenly you're getting 5,000 just in December, that's 5,000 potentially really good reviews. Putting that back onto your profile or your website fuels the social proof that you're a great, trusted seller," Nolan explains.

Delivering a fantastic aftercare service, then, isn't just the first step towards a potentially long-lasting and loyal customer relationship. It also brings that all-important advocacy – the icing on the Christmas cake.

For more information please visit eDesk.com

eDesk

PERFORMANCE

Too bullish in the china shop

In November, Made.com became one of 2022's biggest business failures, but several other firms that assumed their lockdown-era outperformance would continue are regretting their overconfidence

Clara Murray


Joerg Dirmeitis/EyeEm via Getty Images

Last month, the curtains finally came down on Made.com. The online furniture and homeware emporium entered administration on 9 November, axing more than 500 jobs and leaving thousands of customer orders in limbo.

The collapse of a big retailer would be notable at any time, but Made.com was one of the UK's biggest digital success stories of recent years. For much of the 2010s, no stylish millennial home was complete without one of its velvet sofas, rattan lamps or mid-century cabinets. Buoyed by bumper sales during the Covid lockdowns, the company went public in 2021, valued at £775m.

So how was Next able to snap up its website and intellectual property for £3.4m barely a year later? As Made.com's CEO, Nicola Thompson, explained in a statement, the company had been built for "a world of low inflation, stable consumer demand, reliable and cost-efficient global supply chains and limited geopolitical volatility. That world vanished. We could not pivot fast enough."

But Made.com has been far from alone in finding the new reality tough. Many of the lockdown era's other fast-growing digital darlings are also struggling. Profits at online fast fashion giant Asos shot up 253% in the six months to February 2021 but it has reported a pre-tax loss of almost £32m this year. Another youth-focused clothing brand, Missguided, collapsed in August with more than £80m in debts.

Meanwhile, the share price of wine subscription service Naked Wines has tumbled by 90%; mattress company Eve Sleep has been plucked from administration by a more traditional rival, Bensons for Beds; and online grocer Ocado has issued two profit warnings this year. None of the new wave of ultra-fast delivery startups, including Getir, Gorillas, Gopuff and Zapp, have yet turned a profit.

Experts point to three key trends behind the carnage: a steep decline in online shopping, inflation-driven logistics problems and investors' increasing preference for profitability over growth.

Online sales of furniture, DIY and home-delivery groceries boomed during the lockdowns, along with practically all other ecommerce categories. Huge sums flowed into the sector as companies expanded in keen anticipation of ongoing high demand. They built warehouses, bought up stock and went on hiring sprees.

> **Old-world companies such as Next have been waiting for these new internet startups to build a brand and go bust, so that they can buy them cheaply**

Many apparently thought that the momentum would never end. In the first phase of the Covid crisis, "there was a lot of money sloshing around. It looked like the future would be entirely online," says Adrian Palmer, professor of marketing at Henley Business School.

The value of online purchases as a proportion of all retail sales in the UK peaked in January 2021 at 37.8%. It has since fallen to 25.3%, only a few percentage points above pre-pandemic levels, with "a lot of customers realising that it's more efficient to go to traditional shops", Palmer notes.

Moreover, as the UK faces the prospect of a lengthy recession, buying big-ticket items such as furniture online is becoming less appealing to consumers.

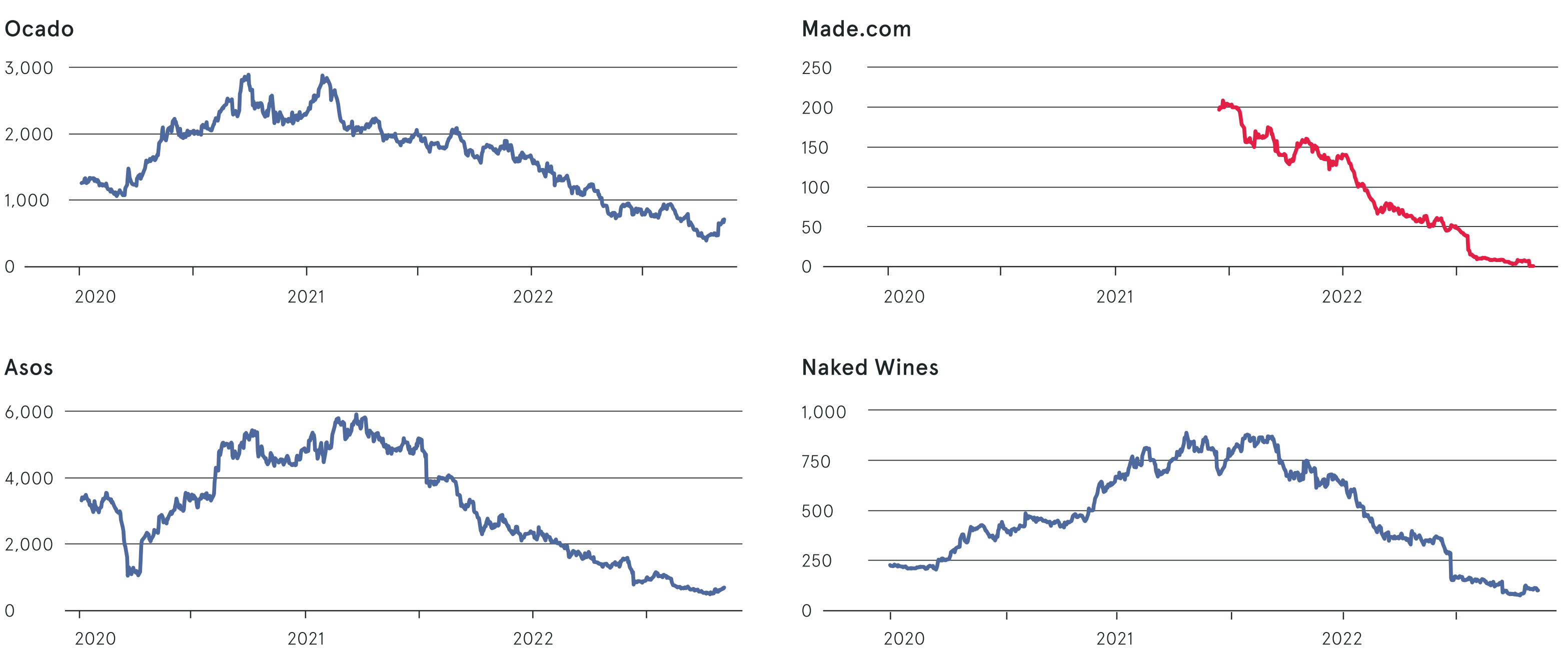
"The smart retailers realised that this was a blip and the world would go back to normal," says Michael Ross, chief retail scientist at Edited and author of *The Customer-Base Audit*. "The ones that completely reset and thought this was the new reality got a very nasty return to Earth."

Such overconfidence has left many firms vulnerable at a time of crisis for both the sector and the wider economy. Recent research published by EY-Parthenon reveals that 40% of all FTSE-listed retailers have issued a profit warning over the past 12 months. More than 70% of those that did so in Q3 2022 cited weakening customer sentiment as a key factor.

MANY OF LOCKDOWN'S DIGITAL WINNERS HAVE SINCE SEEN THEIR SHARE PRICES SLIDE

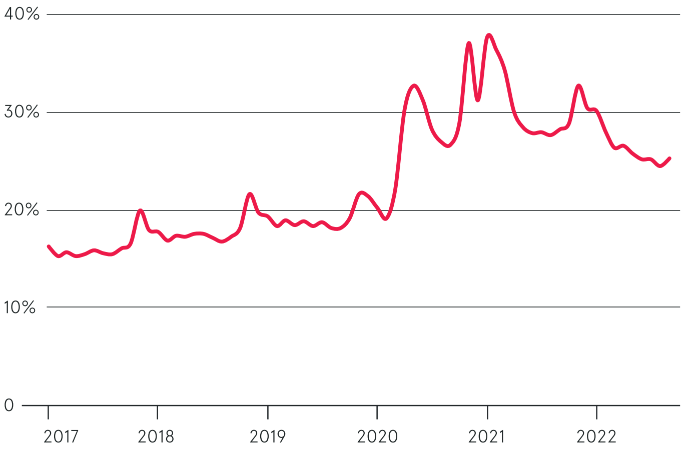
London Stock Exchange, 2022

Share price over the previous two years, pence



ONLINE RETAIL SALES HAVE FALLEN BACK TO THEIR LONG-TERM TREND RATE

Internet sales as a percentage of total retail sales, UK



ONS, 2022

Even Meta, which laid off 11,000 employees in November, was not immune to the hype. Mark Zuckerberg admitted that the social media giant had read too much into the "surge of ecommerce" in 2020-21.

Adding to the perfect storm, the logistics of online shopping have quickly become more expensive. Soaring inflation and a tight labour market are pushing up the costs of shipping, warehousing, delivery and returns – all cornerstones of the internet model.

As a result, many digital-first retailers are short on liquidity at the worst possible moment. Amid supply-chain snarl-ups, Made.com struggled to fulfil orders with its just-in-time model. When it tried to adopt a more stock-heavy strategy this summer, it bought more inventory than it could afford to hold just as consumer confidence was starting to wane, plunging it into a cash crisis.

Naked Wines has also been grappling with logistical problems. Analysts have blamed cost inflation affecting almost every element of its supply chain, from glass and packaging to shipping. At Asos, meanwhile, a new executive team is trying to mitigate such pressures with changes such as "nearshoring" production, introducing shorter buying cycles and slashing promotional offers.

In the short term, online shoppers can expect etail perks such as free shipping and returns to "quietly disappear", says Alexander Graf, co-founder and CEO of ecommerce platform Spryker Systems. "These were a result of there being so much competition. If you had started to charge for shipment, people would have stopped their purchases, but now retailers can't afford not to charge."

In some ways, the situation can be seen as a wider market correction that serves as a salutary warning of the risks of funding gung-ho growth with ever more investment capital rather than profits.

"There will be numerous nervous companies and investors that piled into online startups thinking that these were going to be the next Amazon," Palmer says. "Lots of investors are losing a lot of money."

> **In the long run, those that make it through this will in fact have a stronger business, with really tight cost controls and better margins**

Many of the temporary beneficiaries of the UK's lockdown era "had valuations predicated on exponential growth rates that were mathematically impossible", Ross says. But he adds that investors have been taking a more realistic, pragmatic approach in recent months. "Businesses that have been historically rewarded for top-line growth are now being asked much harder questions about profitability."

Palmer believes that firms using large amounts of debt capital to fund growth may be among the next wave of failures because of the extra squeeze being imposed by rising interest rates. But, in general, the usual pattern seen in past downturns is likely to be repeated.

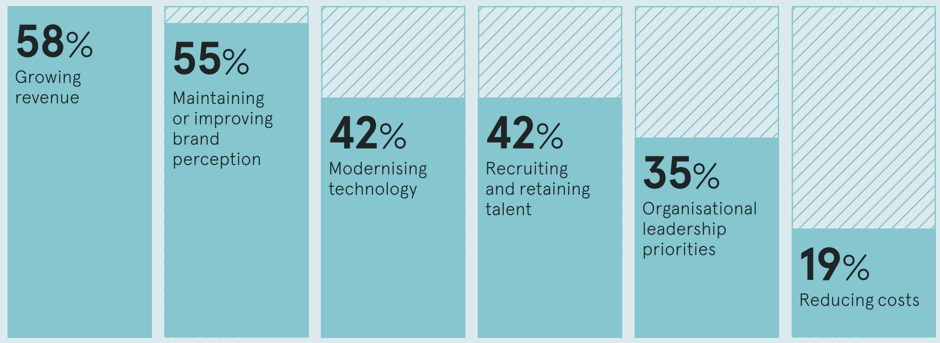
"Those on the edge will be shaken out and taken over by the stronger players," he predicts. "Old-world companies such as Next have been waiting for these internet startups to build a brand and go bust, so that they can buy them cheaply."

Graf adds a note of optimism amid the gloom for those etailers that didn't gamble excessively on the lockdown boom: "In the long run, those that make it through this will in fact have a stronger business. They will have really tight cost controls and better margins – and they'll have a market with fewer competitors."

What's certain is that Made.com will not be the last of its kind to fail in the post-lockdown era. The writing is already on the wall for those struggling to adapt to the new reality.

Commercial feature

TOP CONSIDERATIONS THAT INFLUENCE RETAILER INVESTMENTS IN CUSTOMER SERVICE



Talkdesk, 2022

Foster loyalty with interactive engagement across channels

Brands are transitioning from helping customers in an efficient yet seemingly transactional way, to understanding and engaging with each customer as an individual

Despite the difficult economic environment, retailers remain committed to customer service. In fact, a new report finds that retailers are confident that they can retain and grow their customer relationships through investments in customer service that foster deeper engagement.

However, the report, which draws on insights from an online survey of 303 customer experience professionals across 11 international markets, suggests that retailers are having mixed success when it comes to achieving their current goals for customer service. The recruitment and retention of customer-facing staff and the integration of new technologies are the top barriers that must be addressed before businesses can fully benefit from interactive engagement with customers.

The report, called The Future of Retail Customer Service, is published by Talkdesk, a global cloud contact centre leader for customer-obsessed companies. "Consumers today are looking for more value for their money as inflation cuts into their disposable income," says Antonio Gonzalez, Talkdesk's head of industry research and insights.

"Spending habits are under evaluation as consumers reconsider which purchases are important to them. The bar is getting higher for brands to demonstrate why they should remain a part of their customers' lives. Thankfully, brands recognise the stakes, and they're rising to them."

It follows, then, that customer retention is becoming a bigger focus than winning new customers. As many as 58% of retail CX professionals said that growing revenue is the most significant factor influencing their company's investments in customer service, aligning with the findings of a survey of cross-industry CX professionals that found that 54% of organisations rate customer retention as the primary desired outcome from investments in customer service software.

What's more, retailers are going beyond just understanding and addressing the context behind customer interactions to being able to deliver ongoing, interactive engagement, the Talkdesk report reveals. Growth in channels such as voice-based AI, live-streaming (video) and the metaverse point toward a growing emphasis on interacting with customers in new and engaging ways.

> **The bar is getting higher for brands to demonstrate why they should remain a part of their customers' lives**

But interactive engagement is unlikely to meaningfully deepen customer relationships if each interaction does not feel part of a cohesive, ongoing experience. To accomplish this, retailers must address gaps in customer data collection and use. Unfortunately, the survey reveals that 50% of brands are not yet tracking their customers' product inquiries or issues, and 57% are not using customer data to personalise future service interactions.

The Talkdesk report indicates that integrating channels and workflows is a critical part of embedding interactive engagement. Historically, many organisations have taken a piecemeal approach to investing in "best in breed" solutions to address specific needs. Consequently, many capabilities and systems are poorly compatible. Cloud capabilities, with their additional flexibility, are increasingly preferred for ease of integration with existing systems. These capabilities can be deployed as an all-in-one platform or standalone, with pre-built integrations designed to fit in with existing solutions.

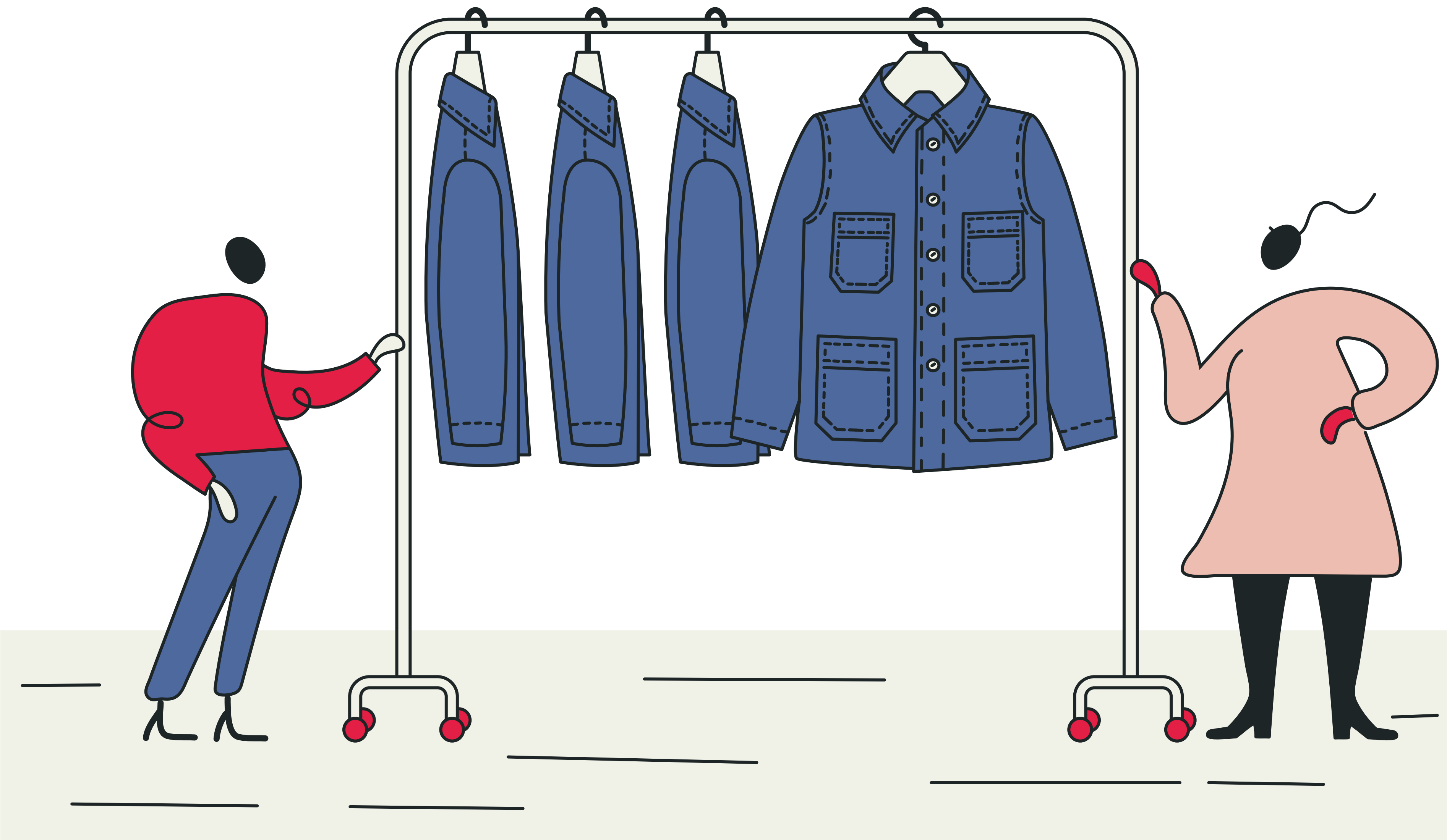
The report also highlights the importance of tracking customer interactions across journeys. Gaps in customer data collection can be addressed through the implementation of interaction analysis, customer feedback and real-time experience sensors. Text and speech analytics applied across channels can deepen understanding of customer issues.

Connecting insight to output is key, the report concludes. Insights from customer interactions should be used to inform future interactions, ensuring that customers feel each touchpoint is part of a broader ongoing experience.

"Challenges relating to staffing and technology integration are likely near-universal today," says Gonzalez. "In working to address these issues today, retailers will position themselves to keep and build upon loyal relationships with consumers – whatever their customer service approach."

For more information visit talkdesk.com/retail

talkdesk



SUSTAINABILITY

Green or dead: The jacket brand backing slow fashion

Apparel brand Paynter is a true exponent of slow fashion. The one thing it's doing apace is earning eco-conscious customers who share its distaste for the industry's wasteful ways

Sam Forsdick

Despite securing a job with Nike, widely rated as the world's most valuable apparel brand, Becky Okell was growing disenchanted with the industry and in particular with its environmental excesses.

The fashion industry produces more than 92 million tonnes of textile waste a year, with UN estimates placing its contribution to global carbon dioxide emissions at between 2% and 8%. Such figures suggested to her that there must be a better way.

"More often than not, companies are knowingly overproducing in favour of low prices that don't fairly pay the makers of their garments," Okell says. "Meanwhile, the pace of trends and shopping keeps accelerating. This cocktail of cheap disposable products means we can't handle the level of waste being churned out every day."

Through her involvement with an entrepreneurship accelerator, Okell met Huw Thomas, who shared many of her concerns about the industry's wastefulness. Together, they identified two key areas for improvement: overproduction and poor product quality. In 2018, they established Paynter Jacket Co: a brand that deliberately limits the number of lines it makes each year.

"We didn't want to follow in the footsteps of others in our industry, with their broken business models," Okell says.

Their solution was to manufacture in small batches, making only the number of items ordered and ensuring that each is designed to last "for decades, not seasons".

Paynter has produced 12 batches in three years, each one a different design. The number of pieces in a batch has varied from 30 to 750, depending on the style and the demand for it.

Limiting production to such an extent might not seem the way to build a profitable business. Okell admits that 12 lines in three years "sounds like nothing compared with most brands, which produce collections with hundreds of styles each season". But the co-founders have found that their singular approach to business has several benefits.

"Being so clear on the problem we're working to solve is a great motivator," Okell says. "Our quality improves with every batch as we learn more and grow ever closer to the fantastic factories we work with. Thankfully, that's a sentiment often shared by our customers."

Making any product in a "thoughtful and responsible way" takes time, she stresses. "It's really important for us to test everything we make through the design process and before we sell it, to ensure that we're confident about quality. Since our focus is on reducing waste in our industry, it's crucial that we grow slowly – and only once we're certain there is demand."

The demand does appear to be there. In May 2019, the company's first batch of 300 sold out in 14 minutes. There was a waiting list of more than 1,000 customers. But this business model is not for the faint-hearted.

"Making only four times a year is incredibly difficult on so many levels," Okell says. "First of all, it's a huge risk. You have to become comfortable with sales amounting to £0 on most days of the year. That forces you to be very careful with how you spend and what you prioritise."

It also means that much is riding on the success of each batch. "If one goes wrong, that's 25% of your annual product and 25% of your reputation at risk."

The pair were unaware of the significance of the risk this placed on their brand until supply chain problems struck in 2020 shortly after

> **We didn't want to follow in the footsteps of others in our industry, with their broken business models**

the first Covid lockdown. Several of their products went missing en route from the factory to their buyers. The jackets had to be remade, causing significant delays for the affected customers.

Although they were understanding, Okell says that she still "felt terrible. Most companies order their stock, receive it and then start selling. So, if something goes missing, only the company would know. For us, when we start to make something, it's already got someone's name on it, so there's a different level of risk there."

Gaining the confidence of customers is crucial for Paynter – and something that Okell and Thomas don't take for granted. As soon as the first orders were manufactured, they knew they "had to deliver a great-quality product to those people who had trusted us".

To this end, anyone who orders a garment is sent video updates from the factory every week, so they can see exactly how it's made. This is something that players in the fast fashion segment are often more concerned about hiding.

"We believe strongly that, if you connect with something, you're more likely to cherish and care for it," Okell says. "That's why we send these videos. We're lucky to have a close community of customers who feel a big part of our brand."

The business remains relatively small, with one part-time employee working with the two full-time co-founders and a handful of freelancers. Paynter has its own studio but no stock room – because it doesn't hold any. Products are sent directly to the customers from the factory and any returns go straight to the next person on the waiting list. Offcuts are also recycled into new thread.

> We're lucky to have a close community of customers who feel a big part of our brand

Okell and Thomas – who are partners in both life and work – have not sought external equity investment to grow the business. The lack of any other shareholder "means that we don't have to compromise based on someone else's values", she says. "As soon as you sell even part of your company, you're inviting in other decision-makers, who ultimately only want a return on their investment. We can understand why some companies and industries are better suited to that way of working, but it's not for us."

For others looking to use unconventional operating models to build their businesses, Okell has some advice: "It might sound obvious but, if you're looking to disrupt, it's good to start with the problem. What's not working well and in need of disruption? It might be the product, the way you do business, how your product is delivered or all of the above. But it's worth picking a lane and sticking to one problem at first. You can keep making improvements as you get up and running and gain momentum."

Paynter's lane remains proving that its industry doesn't have to be wasteful – one batch of clothing at a time.

60% The increase in the number of garments purchased per capita, since 2000

1/2 The length of time each item of clothing is kept for has dropped by

The equivalent of **a bin lorry** of textiles is incinerated or sent to landfill **every second**



UNEP, 2022

Commercial feature

What can UK grocery retailers learn from Scandinavia?

Technology lessons from a market that is more advanced



The Arctic Circle is a place of wonder over Christmas, but this year it should be grocery retailer leaders, not just wide-eyed children, looking to the snowy North for some much-needed inspiration.

According to Jacob Tveraabak, chief executive of Scandinavian grocery technology company StrongPoint, Scandinavia's adoption of technology by grocers can provide valuable lessons for UK supermarkets facing unprecedented cost hikes and labour shortages.

"Pre-pandemic, UK grocery retailers traditionally benefited from price stability and access to relatively low-cost labour," says Tveraabak. "But now, UK grocers are facing challenges which Scandinavian countries, with some of the highest labour costs in the world, have had to grapple with for decades. They have been forced to leverage technology much faster to reduce costs, boost efficiency and increase profitability, and have become the Silicon Valley of grocery retail technology. If you go into a Scandinavian supermarket, you'll find it is years ahead of most other countries."

Tveraabak acknowledges that UK grocers have made strides in grocery technology, particularly warehousing, but upgrades are available to drive further efficiencies, improve customer experience and retain customers who are looking for savings. "There are a lot of efficiency-saving opportunities for UK grocers under pressure, and they can learn from what the Scandinavians have done by leveraging technology," he says. "Everything has changed in the last 12 months. This makes finding these savings more important than ever."

The focus needs to be on three key areas – warehousing, ecommerce and shop floor technology. With warehousing and automated fulfilment, StrongPoint has worked closely with fellow Norwegian robot technology group AutoStore to provide an automated solution for grocery retailers that stores four times the inventory in the same space. Retailers can automatically store and retrieve items including frozen goods (which saves workers going in and out of frozen rooms collecting items).

> If you go into a Scandinavian supermarket, you'll find it is years ahead of most other countries

This links to ecommerce technology, where further savings can be made and productivity boosted by improving in-store pick rates – essentially how quickly staff can complete online orders for customers. Tveraabak says that store workers without technology assistance can, on average, pick 60 to 90 items an hour. Existing self-built UK grocery picking technology and repurposed warehouse management system technology have lifted this to around 150 to 220 items an hour. However, StrongPoint's solution can help workers almost immediately raise their rate to between 240 and 350 items per hour.

"This isn't robotic technology, which remains a very small part of the market, but augmenting the power of manual picking, which is still the most common way for British supermarkets to fulfil orders," explains Tveraabak. "Some store owners who didn't believe our numbers actually followed their staff counting items just to double-check!"

Championing click-and-collect over home delivery is another way grocers and customers can find savings. In Sweden, click-and-collect hovers at around 50% of all grocery ecommerce orders, unlike the UK's home delivery dominated market. Supermarkets can install temperature-controlled grocery lockers next to stores or along commuter routes, allowing customers to pick up their online orders on their way home from work or at their convenience. Any shift towards click-and-collect can substantially slash retailers' costs.

On the shop floor, electronic shelf labels – small screens next to goods showing real-time price changes and promotions – can also remove labour-intensive tasks such as producing and replacing paper labels. Additionally, the shelf edge labels can be set up with blinking lights to identify items to pick, saving precious seconds when locating products. In fact, Norway has one of the highest rates of electronic shelf label penetration in the world.

Other in-store innovations, which would make any UK shopper blink twice, include AI-powered self-checkouts which identify not just the type of fruit or vegetable but which variety, avoiding the need to search through menus.

These checkouts can also verify age when purchasing restricted items, avoiding the awkward and slow staff approval process. In Norway, another common sight is age-controlled or high-value items residing in automated pick-up cabinets that customers can access after selecting the item from a digital screen, retrieving a ticket and paying for them at checkout.

"None of this is expensive 'pie-in-the-sky' technology. It is proven and integrated into thousands of stores used today by millions in Scandinavia," says Tveraabak. "This is a win-win for UK grocers wanting to save costs and for shoppers, who will see a much more frictionless and potentially cheaper shopping experience in the years ahead."

To find out more, visit strongpoint.com

StrongPoint

RANGE MANAGEMENT

Curating the front page

Online retailers are using a mix of AI, data analytics and old-fashioned range management techniques to steer customers towards the right products at the right time

Sally Whittle

When shoppers land on Puma's homepage this Christmas, what they'll see is the result of almost a year's work by the sports retailer.

In common with many brands, Puma needs to order its products two seasons in advance, but the company also spends months perfecting its range management strategy for peak trading periods such as Christmas. It's part of an effort to show customers the right product at the right time to increase the chances of converting visitors into buyers.

It's also a question of avoiding a common pitfall to which many retailers succumb: simply showcasing their best-selling products or focusing on big discounts and promotions – a strategy which is likely to appeal to certain customers more than others. It can also leave retailers with a big pile of expensive inventory after Christmas as products that have had fewer recommendations than others are left unsold.

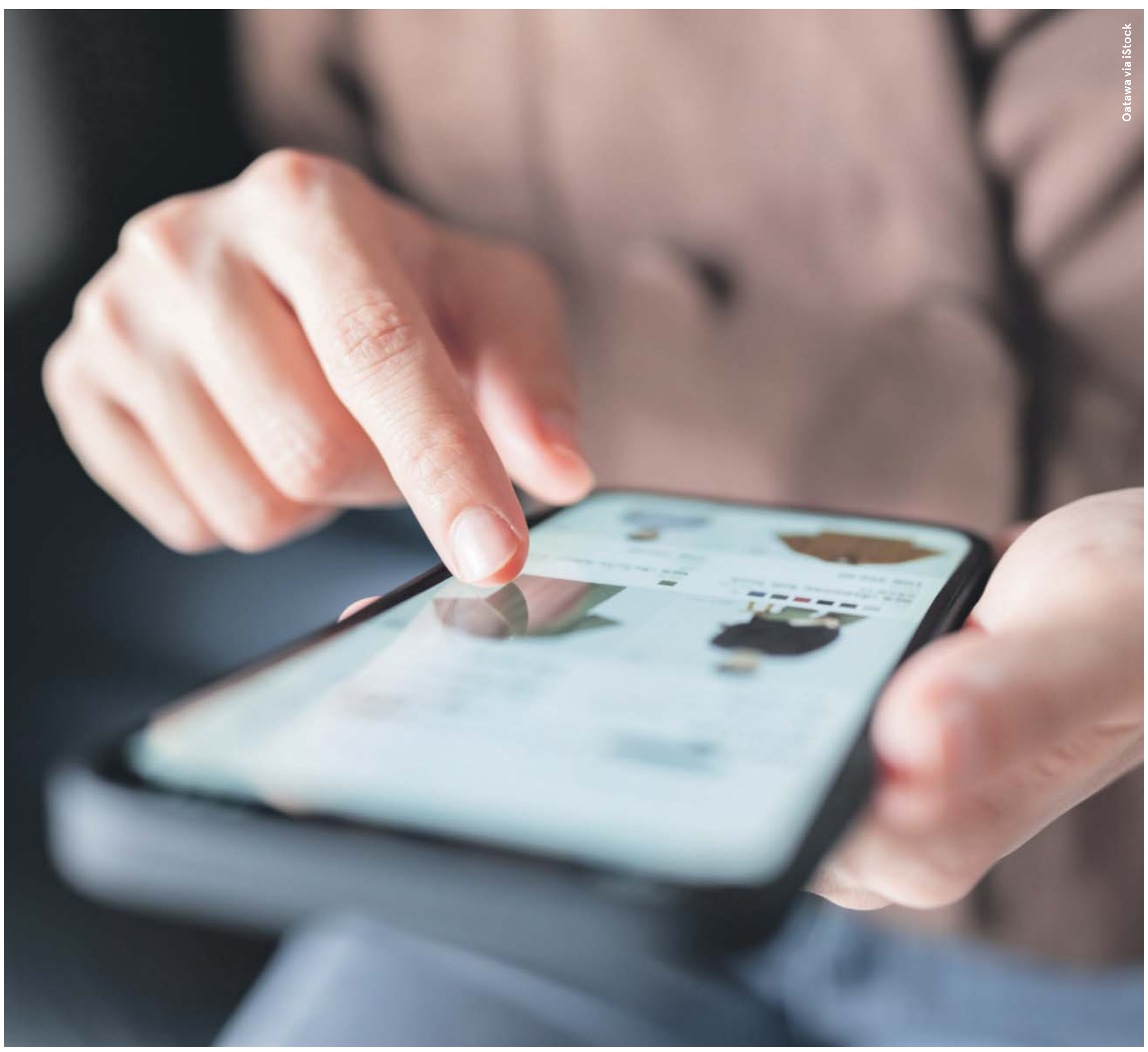
Modern range management is a delicate balancing act. "Successful range management is about how you maximise profit from the products you have in inventory, and what levers you can pull to get those products sold without overspending on digital marketing or having to discount inventory and basically give stuff away," says Michael Ross, senior vice-president at retail consultancy Edited.

To get it right, retailers must understand exactly what the customer wants. They also need to know what the customer might buy, even though they didn't necessarily know they wanted it, adds Ross. "Probably 80% of range management is helping the customer find the things they want. But the other 20% is about recommendation and cross-selling and that can be where retailers make the most profit," he says.

At Groupon, this idea is expressed as a balance between 'exploration' and 'exploitation'. "We can exploit what we already know about the customer, but that has to be balanced with exploring and showing the customer other categories and new products that we have," says Dan Arden, senior director, global CRM and marketing operations at Groupon. "If 80% of customer revenue is from one category, we want to use the other 20% to show things that might be higher-margin or a strong cross-selling opportunity."

One increasingly common way to go about this is personalisation.

> **"We can exploit what we already know about the customer but that must be balanced with exploring and showing the customer other categories and new products**



Puma is typical of a growing number of retailers that use AI models to capture and analyse large quantities of customer data so that they can suitably tailor recommendations on its homepage. But personalisation is not the be-all and end-all. "It's a combination of personalised recommendations to the customer based on the AI insights, plus some brand messaging and campaigns we want to promote," says Dylan Valade, head of technology in the global ecommerce team at Puma.

When someone visits the Puma website, the site personalises content based on AI-driven assumptions about the customer's past actions and likely interests. The system also tracks inventory levels, promoting products that are in stock across all sizes over and above those that are already selling out.

But given stringent data protection laws in the EU, Puma recognises that adapting the online range in this way is becoming more difficult. Instead, the company is increasingly focusing on segmenting customers into certain audience groups, based on common behaviours. "Getting enough data to create a personalised message for each shopper takes a lot of effort, so we're better off looking for audience groups with common interests and goals," says Valade. "From a data privacy point of view, it's better."

Groupon is taking a similar approach. This Christmas, visitors to its website will see a combination of the top 10 best-selling items and personalised recommendations based on their previous behaviour and buying habits. This works best, though, if the customer has provided lots of data and returns to the site regularly. "The problem with algorithms is they need feeding almost constantly and if there isn't constant data, they can struggle," says Arden.

This year, Groupon has invested heavily in the creation of segmented customer persona models, which its algorithm can use to identify the likely preferences of customers based on smaller amounts of data. "If there are limited signals from a customer, then we can look at what data we have – perhaps the last deal the customer looked at, and what email link they clicked – and then look at the models to see what we know about other customers who exhibit those behaviours. We can often say with a high degree of confidence that most customers who do X went on to do Y, even without knowing that individual," explains Arden. He adds that this partly comes from the use of social listening tools and Google Trends, which help Groupon identify what people are posting about and when.

But these kinds of technologies will only work if the underlying strategy is sound, cautions Ross. "Where many businesses go wrong is saying, 'Oh, we need to do some AI' – but that's a solution in search of a problem. What's more interesting is to ask what the business problem is, and how we can use data to make better, more intelligent decisions."

Ross cites the example of a retailer which was using AI to provide recommendations to website visitors. The recommendations were delivering a high conversion rate and appeared to be successful. "But when we looked at the data, only 11% of products were ever recommended and the business had $100m (£83m) in slow-moving inventory," he says. "The real question is how we can use recommendations to help customers but with a preference for those areas where we have more inventory."

Arden views technological options in the same way as the autopilot function on a plane. "You use autopilot but if you're flying into a storm or there's a risky situation, the pilot takes over," he says. "Data is great but retailers are looking at three years of data where nothing was normal, so this Christmas it's essential that we apply human common sense at the same time." ●

CUSTOMERS LOVE THE RANGE AND PRICES AVAILABLE ONLINE, BUT IN-STORE SHOPPING IS BETTER FOR EXPLORATION

"What was the most important reason why you decided on the specific channel you used to make a purchase?" (Survey of consumers worldwide)



Deloitte, 2022

Commercial feature

Why sensory ecommerce is the key to success for mid-sized retailers

Putting new technologies to work could help online retailers stand out from the crowd and deliver exactly what consumers are seeking



These days, ecommerce is continuing to grab a bigger share of the retail market, approaching more than 20% of total retail sales. But for this trend to progress further, brands will need to appeal to more of our basic needs, including our five senses – and even our sixth.

After all, we like to employ all of our senses when we explore products and make choices about what we buy. We even tap into our emotional side at times as well. Compared to online shopping, merchants and brands engaging consumers in the physical world have unmatched opportunities for sensory and story-like engagement, including store layout, merchandising, aromas, audio and conversation. Online retailers are increasingly conscious of this point of differentiation; just look at the large and growing number of pop-up shops that will appear this holiday season.

20%

The proportion of retail sales attributed to ecommerce

eMarketer, 2021

So, it should come as no surprise that online retailers are trying to replicate the experience of shopping in-person on their platforms, using innovations such as videos and 360-degree views of products, as well as VR, AR and the metaverse. Meanwhile, in-store experiences are being digitally enriched with innovations ranging from smart mirrors inside dressing rooms to handheld guidance and merchandising via apps.

For small, aspirational merchants, the challenge is simply to create a platform that delivers a smooth ecommerce experience. Meanwhile, larger retailers have the resources to invest in developing their own bespoke platforms that can recreate some of the excitement of using the five senses when consumers make a purchase.

"Retail shouldn't be aspirational, it should be inspirational – and filled with entertainment and emotion, tapping into all of our senses," says Ben Marks, director of global market development at Shopware, the leading global provider of B2C and B2B ecommerce solutions. For too long, he argues, mid-sized retailers have been underserved. They've graduated beyond simple ecommerce solutions but don't yet have the wherewithal to create their own more sophisticated, bespoke platforms that can deliver more of the "six senses" experience.

> Retail should be inspirational, filled with entertainment and emotion, tapping into our six senses

To that end, Shopware is designed with the senses in mind, helping retailers ensure that consumers can tap into each of their senses when deliberating a purchase. For example, the platform offers visual demonstration tools as well as guided selling and simplified return processes. When it comes to sight and sound, customers are able to zoom in, spin and even "try" something on, in addition to interacting with that product through the power of video.

As for the "sixth sense", predictive analytics, Shopware allows retailers to anticipate needs and wants using purchase history and third-party data to highlight products which have been curated to the consumer's size and preference, while also reflecting available inventory. Thanks to the extensive data produced by ecommerce, most retailers should be able to rely on artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) to move beyond simple statistical analysis – for example, by identifying the most frequent customers or those with the highest average order value. They should be able to gain better insights into their customers and engage them more effectively with improved segmentation and trend analysis.

However, SME merchants tend to over-index on obvious data, leading to increased retargeting of top customers rather than identifying underperforming segments, believes Marks. "Once you've spotted under-engaged customers using on-hand data, AI/ML tools will help tailor various media to better engage those customers – via media like landing page content, product descriptions and recommendations – as well as setting prices dynamically based on past performance and external market factors."

"At midmarket scale, brands are flush with data, but the data are often siloed in various applications and systems which were added to the business over time in response to growth," says Marks. "Connecting systems and operationalising data are essential activities to streamline business operations, unlock consumer insights and creating capacity for further growth."

In order to meet these challenges, a growing number of mid-sized retailers are working with Shopware. They appreciate the fact that the company is more agile and responsive to their needs than other providers because it uses open-source coding, adapting an approach which has driven innovation and more effective solutions for customers in a wide range of sectors. Indeed, open-source coding fosters fresh perspectives and new approaches. Other benefits include its iterative nature and the power of the community that it unleashes.

> Connecting systems and operationalising data are essential activities to streamline business operations

Marks is increasingly hearing feedback from mid-sized retailers who appreciate that Shopware 6 is a turnkey, full-featured ecommerce solution which can be tailored to the needs of merchants and their customers. By having plenty of features and functions in place from day one, while also allowing retailers to quickly customise to deliver the exact integrations, operational workflows and customer experience that a retailer needs, Shopware enables rapid "time-to-revenue".

"This approach is especially relevant for mid-market merchants, who tend to want enterprise-level freedom of movement without the budget, resources or years-long timeline to build and maintain systems from scratch or based on a collection of commerce endpoints," says Marks. "It enables forward-looking, innovative mid-market brands to create the kind of engaging multi-sensory experience that was once the sole preserve of the big names, so that they can themselves become the big names of tomorrow."

"We wanted to create a visually stunning, immersive experience that allows our customers to completely immerse themselves in our brand"

"We're not a group of innate techies, so we needed a partner like Shopware to help us build a website and create a way to sell the bicycles we were building," says Sam Nicols, CEO of YT Industries, a premium performance mountain bike company which exclusively sells direct to consumer.

"We're a mid-sized company with big aspirations. We're too small to show up on the list of the big players platform-wise, which is why Shopware has been a great fit.

"YT was born as a D2C brand, but because the product is so expensive, we can't use the sort of traditional shopping experience you'd use to sell socks or sunglasses. We wanted to create a visually stunning, immersive experience with high-res video, amazing shots that allows our customers to completely immerse themselves in our brand – and excite them at the same time. A standard, traditional ecommerce shop would never have worked for us given the nature and price point of our product.

"We experienced strong double-digit growth globally year-over-year 2021 to 2022, and we're very pleased with that. If you're passionate about building your product and building your brand, but you don't have the expertise to build a site on your own and don't want to invest too heavily in IT resources, a provider like Shopware can help."

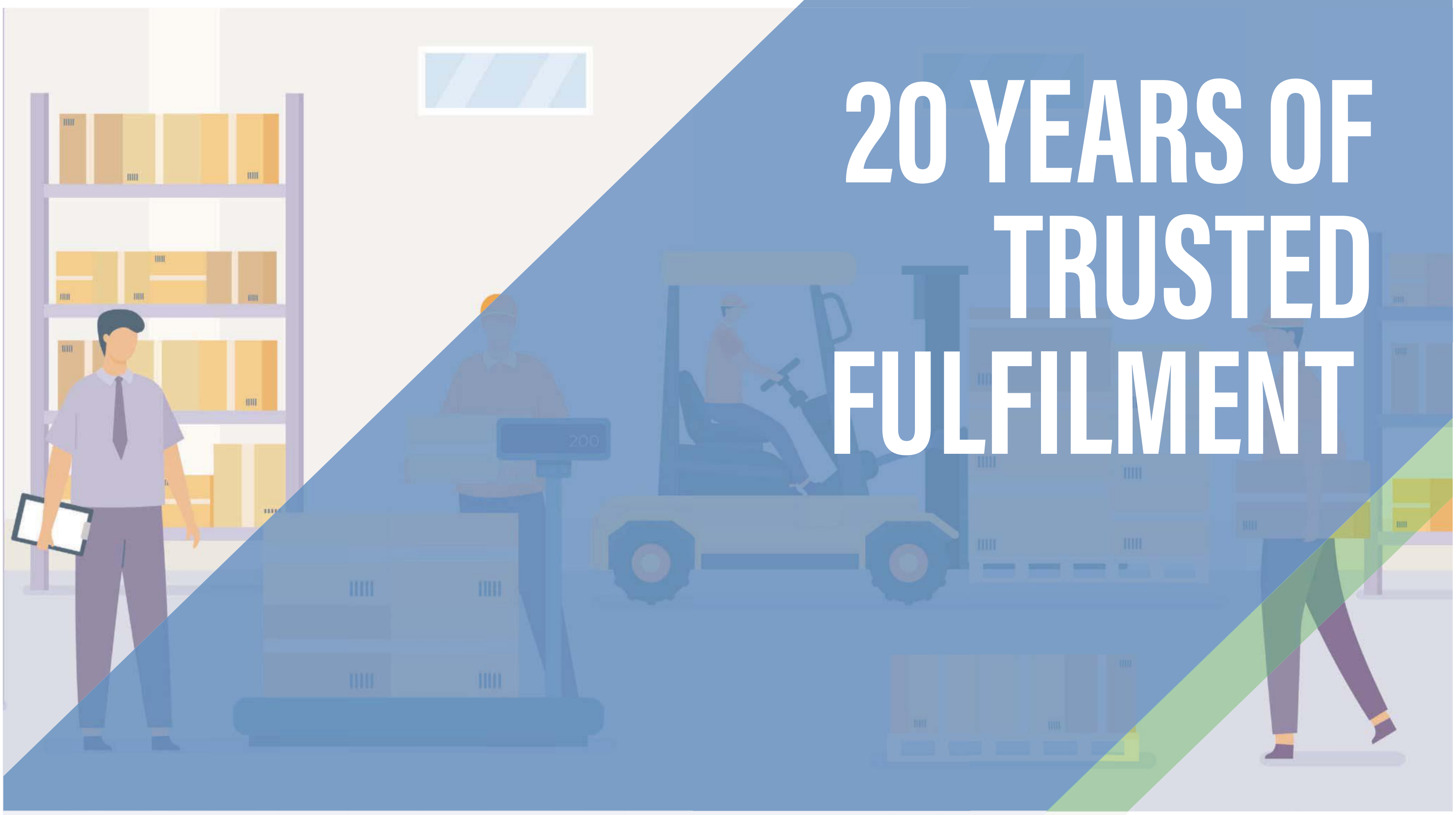
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TIMES 2
December 8 | 2022



I was followed back to my hotel room after a night out

Why did no one intervene?

How to decide when to turn your heating on — my definitive guide

Deborah Ross

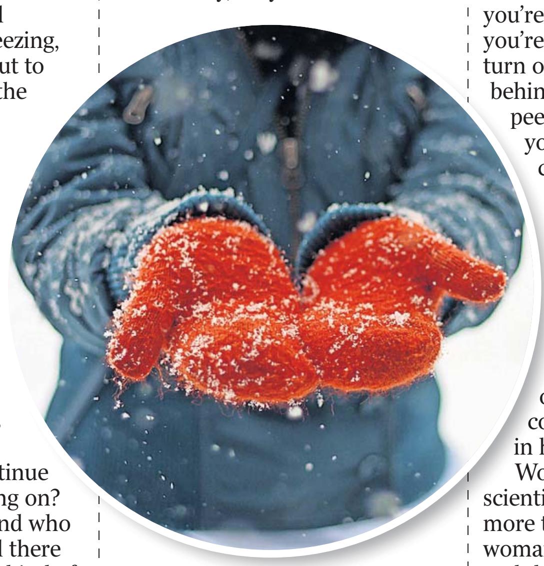


The so-called Troll of Trondheim is upon us. This is the arctic weather that is bringing bitterly cold temperatures to Britain and comes from Norway, who must have deliberately leaked it from a lab, says GB News, which knows about these things.

Whatever the source, and whether or not this is part of the Norwegian plan for global domination, it's bloody freezing, and temperatures are about to plunge further, so now is the time to make those important heating decisions. There's a video doing the rounds of someone turning on their radiator at the valve, then hearing the voice of a cattle auctioneer and the rhythmic recitation of the price going up and up and up and quickly turning it off again. That's what's foremost in all our minds. So should you continue to hold out? Or is it heating on? And, if so, for how long, and who gets to call the shots? Will there be fisticuffs? To avoid any kind of fracas, or doubt, I would advise you to follow my definitive guide, When to Turn Your Heat On, which you may wish to cut out and hang next to the thermostat. That way everyone will know where they stand, particularly if they don't pay the bills round here and should just put another jumper on and do some star jumps and what am I? Made of money? Here you are.

Are you a young person? (Step away from the thermostat. Step away now. Seriously, just put another jumper on.)

Are you a dad? (There's no turning the thermostat up on your watch. Sayings to repeat include "Do you think I'm made of money?" and "When you pay the bills, you can make the rules". Your other sayings — "Were you born in a barn?", "Don't make me turn this car round", "Why would you pay money for jeans with holes in?" and "Who left the lights on downstairs?" — are not applicable in this instance but don't worry, they're not about to fall into disuse. That hasn't ever happened yet.)



Are you a young person but not that young? (Step away. I refer you to Jerry Seinfeld, who has said: "I didn't touch a thermostat until I was 28 years old, I was so afraid of it." Do star jumps, put another jumper on.)

Are you alone in the house? (Tempting. L'Oréal would say you're worth it, but deep down you know different. How can L'Oréal even make that call when it hasn't met you? It talks through its hat, L'Oréal. Do you have a "slanket" to warm up? One of those blankets with arms? If not, have you tried putting your dressing gown on back to front? Nine out of ten people say it works just the same, and you'll save yourself £50.)

Do you have people coming over? (Tricky. You don't want them to think you are this poor soul huddled in your dressing gown back to front, and they are guests, and you'd want them to feel comfortable, but what if you're out? You know, like when you're "out" for Halloween and turn off all the lights and hide behind the sofa and don't make a peep? That kind of "out". When you think about it, what a cheek. Coming over here from God knows where to steal all your heat!)

Are you a dad who has come home to find the heating has been put on behind your back? (You must make exaggerated fanning motions while opening a window and complaining: "It's tropical in here.")

Women, it has been scientifically proved, feel the cold more than men, so are you the woman who has the jumper on, and the back-to-front dressing gown and is now typing in mittens, but when you say, "I can assure you, I'm freezing," that's dismissed because it's not as verifiable as, for example, saying "I'm eating a chicken sandwich" or "I have two ears, one on each side of my head"? (Go on. Whang it on. However, to prevent it being turned off behind your back you may need to stand at the dial with breadknife, cricket bat, knuckle-dusters and a German shepherd.)

Are you the family German shepherd? (Mate, this is going to be fun.)

Elf on the shelf? Get stuffed

What is the "elf on the shelf tradition" and, if it's a tradition, how come I haven't heard of it? Or hadn't until this week?

I kept seeing it mentioned everywhere and now understand that it's for young children. What you have to do is buy a soft-toy, long-limbed elf that from the beginning of December you place somewhere in your house, finding a new spot for it every morning. You do this because during the night it has flown back to the North Pole to report to Santa whether the children are misbehaving and whether they should be on the good list or the naughty list. What is this tyranny? Am I the only one who would want to give elf on the shelf a bop round the chops, upbraid it for being a tell-tale and send it on its way?

I wonder: who gets to decide on making Christmas yet more expensive and yet more of a faff? Can anyone have a go? Could I have a go? Apparently, this "tradition" dates from 2005 and the book by Carol Aebersold and Chanda Bell, which was sold with the toy. Great work, guys. As it is, I'm only just getting over the "tradition" of the "Christmas Eve box", which is a box full of little gifts you give the night before and which is just taking the piss, basically.

One last bit of extra faffiness. I noted that Marco Pierre White, writing in this week's Radio Times about making the perfect Christmas roast potatoes, talks about "the art" of peeling and how you should always peel your potato "from top to bottom". Are the top and bottom marked? Have I just missed that all these years?

He thought I

… then I confronted him. How safe is a woman on a night out in our city centres? Ellie Flynn went undercover and was shocked by her experiences

I stumble past the exit of a busy club and take a few seconds to gather my thoughts, swaying as I pull my phone out of my bag to send a text with my eyes half closed.

"You OK?"

It feels as though the man beside me has sprung from nowhere, but suddenly he engulfs all my personal space as he asks my name and where I'm from. I give a couple of one-word responses before trying to cut the conversation short, telling him I need to find my friends.

He moves with me as I step away, trying to get some distance so I can concentrate on sending a message without him peering over my shoulder — but every time I try to lose him he sticks with me, offering a taxi or asking where I'm going.

I cross the road, reiterating that I'm going to find my friends, but nothing will deter this man — and I quickly realise he's not alone. In a moment of panic, I realise there are two men following me as I stumble around London's busiest nightlife area looking drunk and vulnerable. I'm surrounded by people, with police on every corner, and yet I feel completely out of control. And here's the thing — I'm stone-cold sober.

I'm undercover, acting drunk and separated from my friends on a night out in Leicester Square in a bid to highlight the terrifying reality of sexual harassment for a new Channel 4 *Dispatches* documentary, *Undercover: Sexual Harassment — The Truth*, which airs on Monday.

It will come as little surprise to any woman reading this that sexual harassment is prevalent, but even I was stunned by the extent of predatory behaviour I experienced across two nights out in Liverpool and London this summer.

Being followed by those two men in Leicester Square was terrifying — but it was not an isolated incident. In fact, it was the third time in 24 hours that I'd been picked out of a crowd and followed by men who seemed to have noticed my "drunk" state.

The previous night I had travelled to Liverpool, a city with a vibrant nightlife scene but one of many across the UK that has a high number of reports of sexual and violent crimes centred on its bars and clubs. As I'd sat in my hotel room being miked up and preparing myself for the long night ahead, I'd started to wonder if I was cut out for this.

Despite having a huge team supporting me, specialised security and plenty of undercover experience, I was really afraid. Years of simply being a woman who enjoys a night out had given me a vague sense of what I could expect but seeing your previous, vulnerable, drunk self through sober eyes is a chilling experience — and nothing could truly prepare me for what came next. A few hours into my night, I slumped on a bollard and half-heartedly attempted to roll a cigarette. A man approached me and asked how I was and where I was going — the first in a stream of persistent questions I gave few responses to.

He asked if I wanted to go to a hotel or a bar, or smoke weed with him. I ignored all these suggestions, slurring, "I'm going to find my friends" and "I'm fine on my own". I attempted to lose him while still acting drunk but none of this put him off and, less than ten minutes after approaching me, he followed me into my hotel room.

As part of our undercover filming, we had rigged a hotel room with secret cameras in case someone followed me all the way back. Going into the night, I had thought it was a possibility but, in all honesty, I didn't expect it to happen and when the time came to actually confront this man, all I could think about was how genuinely terrified I was, how easy it was for him to follow me in — and how little he seemed to care about my lack of consent to him being there.

"We came together," he insisted, after I asked him why he had followed me in. My heart was racing as I replied: "No, we didn't come together, you followed me. I never said to come."

Despite having a security guard hiding in the nearby bathroom and a safe word ready to use if anything were to happen, I was acutely conscious of being in such an enclosed space with a man I believe could have

> **In the UK 1 in 4 women have been followed on a night out**

been a sexual predator. It took all my courage to reveal I was actually sober, ask what he was doing there and insist I had not consented in any way to him being there — and ask him to leave. Even watching the footage back later, I am struck by his reaction.

"I'm sorry," he insists more than once, getting up to leave and seeming genuinely confused by my sober revelation. He gets to the door and I remember feeling a flood of relief, part of me almost wondering if he genuinely believed he'd done nothing wrong — but then he turns to me and says: "Come on, give me a kiss."

It's this final act of harassment, even after I'd confronted him about his behaviour and my feelings, that I find most appalling. I thankfully managed to get him out of the hotel room without needing security to step in. Afterwards, I was hit by a flood of emotion: thankful my night was over,

was drunk and vulnerable…

COVER AND BELOW: CIRCE HAMILTON FOR THE TIMES







Top, from left: Ellie Flynn; with an actor in a promotional image for the documentary. Above: footage showing a man who had followed her into her hotel room

but terrified about what his return to the streets could mean for other drunk, vulnerable women.

Running this experiment across two nights out in one weekend demonstrates how prevalent this behaviour is. In an exclusive YouGov survey for Channel 4 we found that 1 in 4 women in the UK have been followed on a night out and 82 per cent are conscious of the threat of predatory behaviour from men when walking alone in the dark. We also found 1 in 4 women surveyed had been raped or sexually assaulted on a night out.

These statistics, my experiences and all the research I did for this film paint a stark picture for women's safety. Yet what I find perhaps more disturbing than the fact this happens is that it happens in plain sight. In Liverpool and London I was surrounded by people who didn't appear to notice as I was followed, grabbed and harassed.

In Leicester Square in particular I was struck by the number of police officers I passed. Despite the police's protestations that tackling violence against women is a "top operational priority", my experience suggests that little is being done by officers on the streets to actively look out for anyone who may be vulnerable to sexual predators on a night out.

This topic often leads to a conversation around how ineffectual policing is when it comes to violence against women — and rightly so, when just 1.6 per cent of rape accusations lead to a charge. However, police are only part of the solution. Across those two nights I staggered past huge numbers of people who either didn't notice the threat I was facing or chose not to intervene, and I can't help but reflect on the need for a wider understanding of the threat women face.

After showing our footage to an all-male focus group, one participant noted: "The only place women alone in public at night would feel safe is in a crowded place and this happened right in front of a million people, so clearly no place is safe."

Reflecting on my own past experiences made me realise how jaded by sexual harassment I had become, and it was only making this film that made me acknowledge how this has been an unsavoury part of my life since I was a teenager. Again, I'm not alone in that.

Over half of schoolgirls have experienced public sexual harassment while wearing school uniform, including being groped, stared at, cat-called, followed or wolf-whistled. I met a group of schoolgirls to discuss their experiences and was shocked to learn that 15 of the 17 had experienced some form of sexual harassment.

One told me: "The one that stands out to me the most is the first time, which was when I was, like, ten. It was… a group of guys in a park. They said they wanted to have sex with me and I was just, like, I didn't really even know what sex was."

Another added: "I would take the bus to school. And when it was warm in the summer, a bus driver would ask us to take off our tights. He would say, 'If you're too warm, you can take off your tights. Take off your skirts for me.' He would stand there and watch. And I never wore my school skirt again."

Hearing these stories first-hand from children experiencing this behaviour for the first time was heartbreaking and reiterated how sexual harassment comes in many guises. There can be a tendency to define behaviours as less or more severe, but perhaps we're better off recognising that this all exists as a continuum. That first comment shouted at you when you're ten quickly becomes the panic of being followed as you try to make your way home. It all creates a sense of fear and unease that too many of us have become uncomfortably accustomed to.

***Undercover: Sexual Harassment — The Truth* is on Channel 4 on Monday at 10pm and on All 4**

Me, a balding muppet? If you say so

Ed Potton

So Christopher Bouzy, the American tech entrepreneur and an ally of Harry and Meghan, once called Prince William a "balding muppet". To which I say, so what?

Having started to recede in my twenties, I long ago made peace with my tonsorial destiny. In the late Nineties I had a drunken argument with a friend that culminated in him referring to me with a similar phrase to the one Bouzy used on Twitter last year, although the noun wasn't as family-friendly as "muppet". That stung at the time, but the good thing about losing your hair early is the delayed joy you get when your mates follow suit later. The above friend, indeed, has recently had to contend with an attack on two fronts: receding at the forehead, sparse patches at the back. God, that feels sweet.

Hair loss does seem to be the main reason that William has slid down the hotness chart since his Eton days, when he was the object of inappropriate lasciviousness from most of the women I knew, and some of the men. That doesn't really happen now. We baldies have to accept that a chunk of our looks disappears with our locks, scuppering our chances, however slim, of matinee-idol status — action heavy or brooding character actor is the best we can hope for.

I once got together with a woman who then had to break the news to her boyfriend. "Sounds like a James Bond type," the jilted chap said, having asked for a description of me. "Hmm, more Bond villain," she told him.

I appreciate that those less accustomed to being bald may find Bouzy's comments more offensive. Is there a parallel with the abuse directed at redheads, which some see as a hate crime? The main difference, I suppose, is that ginger people are ginger for a larger proportion of their lives than bald people are bald. Being called a ginger minger in the playground is far nastier than having one's retreating hairline mocked as an adult. Given everything else William has to contend with at the moment, Bouzy's swipe should be water off a duck's back — or maybe water off a gleaming pate.



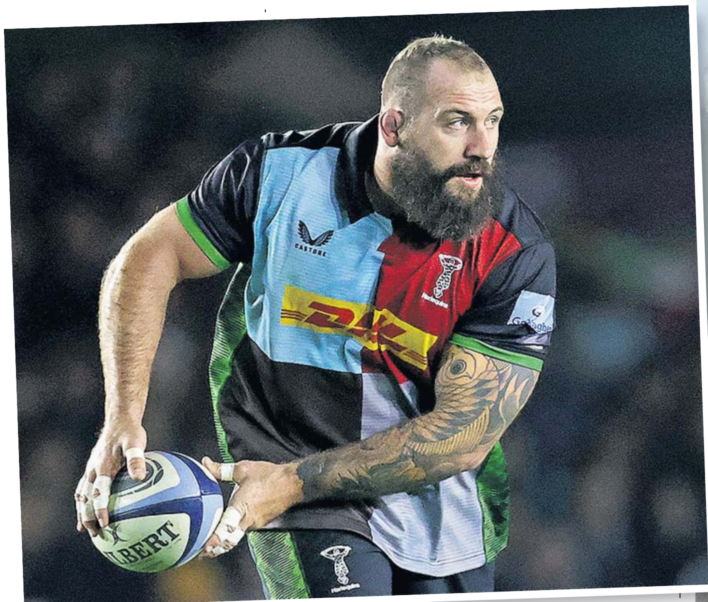
"Bond villain" Ed Potton and the Prince of Wales

I was crying, saying, 'I don't want to be here any more'

Rugby star Joe Marler tells Robert Crampton how he has fought back from his lowest moments and why he's supporting the suicide-prevention charity Calm

THE TIMES THE SUNDAY TIMES
CHRISTMAS APPEAL





Right: Joe Marler, the England loose-head prop. Above: playing for Harlequins last month

In 58 years on the planet, 33 of them spent in part meeting people for a living, I've rarely come across anyone I've hit it off with as instantly as Joe Marler. Straight away, saying hello at the ground of his club, Harlequins, at Twickenham Stoop in southwest London, I liked him enormously. And only partly because he was nice about my hair. I would dare to suggest he liked me too.

Within a minute of meeting, we were sharing a big man-hug on the terrace, just outside the Jason Leonard bar. Well, he was hugging me; I don't think my arms got further than halfway round his back.

At 6ft, he's not tall for a rugby pro in this age of titans. But he makes up for that by weighing about 18-19st. With that bulk, plus the mohawk and the tats, he could present as intimidating. He is anything but.

Marler's public image has occasionally veered towards that of a cartoon bad boy, all furrowed brow, glower and monosyllabic grunts. In person, he's candid, friendly, peaceable, trusting. I hate to use the phrase gentle giant, but even so… Shortly after the hug, he's asking about my kids and the preferred abbreviation for my name, and insisting I have a chocolate from the big tin on the table in the corporate box where we chat. Within five minutes, we're discussing whether he and his wife, Daisy, will have any more children. Perhaps he's like that with everyone. And yet I flatter myself that we make a special connection.

Why so matey? I can't believe it's because we both played loose-head prop, me for my school team before retiring at 15, him still shoving away in the scrum at 32 after 200-plus games for Quins and with 79 England caps to his name, many of them gained at the national stadium towering over the car park just 300 yards away.

I think it's more likely that we hit it off because of our mutual mental health issues, manifesting variously as eccentricity, mood swings, depression and anger. We're both on antidepressants (escitalopram for him, old-school fluoxetine for me) and we both see, or have seen, therapists. We're both given to impulsive decisions. We were both fat lads. We both have wives who have put up with all manner of nonsense. We both enjoy cold open-water swimming — or "bobbing", in his case, his swimming skills not being the best.

Marler's showreel, like my own in a different context, is mixed: in interviews he can be funny, quirky and charming. But also on occasions argumentative, morose, sometimes plain weird. On the pitch he's been in trouble a few times, most shamefully for calling the Wales prop Samson Lee, who has a Traveller background, "Gypsy boy".

Not long ago he also grabbed the Wales captain Alun Wyn Jones's unmentionables in full view of the TV cameras during the Six Nations. He's no angel. I don't condone his Traveller taunt or his tackle-tinkering. But given the things that are said and done in a scrum, many fans would say his real offence was to get caught. And Joe Marler is the sort of bloke who does get caught.

We're here to talk about Marler's mental health issues. He is an ambassador for Calm, the Campaign Against Living Miserably, a suicide-prevention charity that this year is one of the chosen beneficiaries of The Times and The Sunday Times Christmas Appeal.

"Calm reached out to me a few years ago when they realised I was happy to talk about this stuff. I met them and loved how in-your-face they were. I hadn't heard of them. I thought, 'Calm? That sounds nice.' Then I found out what it stood for. I said 'Campaign Against Living Miserably? That's a bit dark, isn't it?' They said, 'We're a suicide-prevention charity.' And I thought, 'Yeah, that's good actually, because half the issue is actually mentioning the word.' It's such a taboo. I found out that suicide is the biggest killer of men under 45 and I thought, 'F*** me dead!' "

Marler is spot-on about the taboo. In his memoir, published two years ago, he refers to having "dark thoughts". Are we talking about what I think we're talking about, I ask, taking refuge in euphemism? "Yeah, suicide," he answers baldly, necking another chocolate.

"Fortunately, I never attempted it. You're sitting there driving in the car and you think, 'If I go quick enough here and I go off this bridge and see what it's like to not be here…' But then rationality kicks in and you think, 'Hang on a minute, it's not a computer game.' It was a lack of self-worth. That idea that 'you would be better off without me'."

But why, I ask, would he feel that Daisy, his childhood sweetheart, would be better off without her husband? Or that Jasper, Maggie,

> I don't think you reach a point where you can say you're cured

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LUCY YOUNG FOR THE TIMES; DAVID ROGERS/GETTY IMAGES



> You don't realise how scared you make someone

Felix and baby Pixie would be better off without their dad?

"I don't know," he says with a sigh. "I've done some work on myself, I've learnt loads in the last couple of years and picked up tools and hopefully gained more self-awareness, but there's still stuff I haven't dealt with.

"The biggest breakdown I had was back in 2018, the day after a massive row with Daisy, crying in my coach's arms, saying, 'I don't want to be here any more. I'm a bad person.'"

Growing up, did he have people telling him he was a bad person? There follows a long silence. Are his parents still alive, I prompt. "As far as I know," he replies. "I haven't spoken to my mum for seven years and my dad for four." Aha. He doesn't want to elaborate further. "Like I mentioned earlier, I need to delve further into that bit of me before talking about it. I sit in a good place, but there's still some unresolved stuff. I'm better equipped to deal with it now, but not so well equipped to move forward."

He does offer this insight. "When me and Daisy were first together and talking about having kids and discussing how we were going to discipline them, I was, 'Well, if they're out of line, I'll give them a whack, because I turned out all right.' And she said, 'Excuse me? Really? Did you?'"

He also says: "At the moment I find myself snapping at my eldest. He's eight. We're similar, we clash. I find myself going back to how I was brought up and I hated that. I was, like, 'What am I doing?' I've got to try and put myself in his shoes and remember how I used to feel."

In 2016 Marler had "a bit of a meltdown" and found himself "bursting into tears" driving to work. He lost his rag in the tunnel with Dean Ryan, then the Worcester coach, and slapped him where it hurts. "Then I stormed home from a game here in full kit."

Much as he loves interacting with them now, he'd find himself being rude to fans. "My wife and friends used to hate it. If they saw someone coming over at lunch, they'd tense up. The fan would say, 'Sorry for interrupting, can we get a photo?' and I'd go, 'Bugger off. I'm with my family, how dare you?'"

His low point came when, in the course of that massive row with Daisy, he lost his temper, trashed the kitchen and stormed off. I tell him that before (thanks in large part to fluoxetine) I got on top of my own rage, the kitchen furniture in our house took a similar hammering.

"Yeah, you think you're the big man," he agrees, "but then actually you go for the kitchen furniture 'cos it's the easiest to break. I came back," Marler says, reminding us both this is a serious business, "my wife's on the floor crying her eyes out. I think, 'Who am I? Why am I spoiling the thing I love?' You don't realise how scared you make someone. She was terrified."

As he says, Marler is in a much better place these days. "But it's an ongoing process. A lot of people tend to say, 'Oh, so you're better now? You're cured?' I remember sitting waiting for some fish and chips and this lad I'd grown up with [in Eastbourne, East Sussex, where he still lives] bowls up and says, 'All right, Joe, howya doing? You got The Depressed, didn't you? All fixed now? Still doing the rugby?' I don't think you ever reach a point where you can say you're cured. It's more about discovery, whether that's serious trauma or whether you're just that way inclined."

Despite rugby's hard-earned macho reputation, Marler says the reaction within the game to his psychological struggles was generally positive. At Harlequins, the club doctor persuaded him there was no shame in taking medication. "He said it's like taking an antibiotic for an infection. I was, like, 'Right. That's not a bad analogy. Thank you.'"

Meanwhile, his team-mates were unsurprised by the news. "They were, 'Yeah, of course, we've always thought, What Joe are we gonna get?'"

As when Gareth Thomas came out as gay, the feeling was "yeah, no big deal, so what?" "That's in stark contrast," Marler notes, "to how it would have been even ten years ago. Then it would have been, 'Eh? You soft bastard!' Now, we're not there yet, but we're getting there." Thanks to brave men such as Joe Marler, maybe the journey won't take too much longer.

Vive les rosbifs! Confessions of an England fan living in Paris

The French think they'll win. Of course they do. By Hannah Meltzer

There is no French word for "banter", but the Parisians definitely know what it is. And Paris, like other cities and towns across the Channel, is in the grip of football fever — never more so than now, as England and France prepare to meet each other in the knockout stage of the World Cup for the first time on Saturday night. "You have a good team," a French friend said to me. "You can go home proud."

It's not easy being an England fan in France right now. There are huge screens in every bar, endless Tricolour flags — and every café is abuzz with anticipatory chatter about the match. The French think they are going to win, bien sûr.

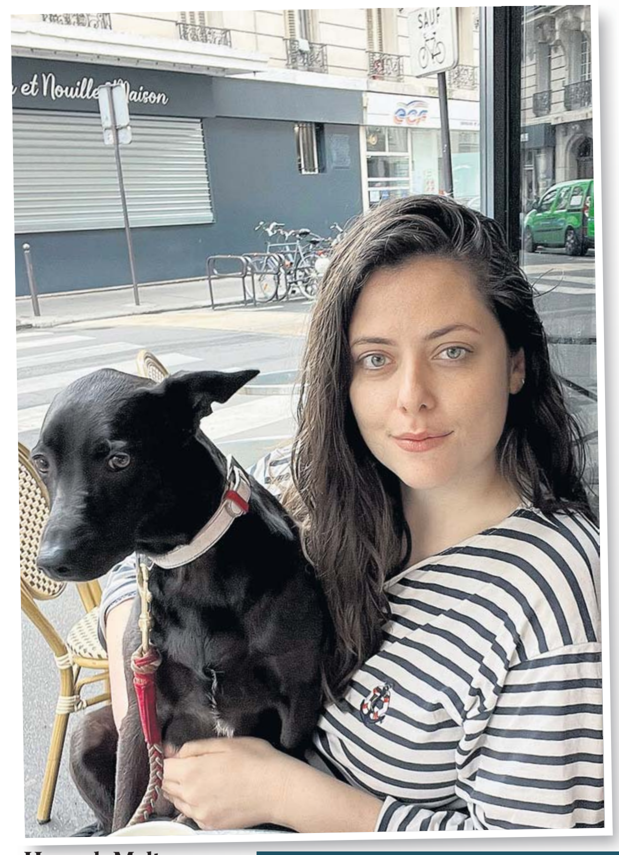
Of course they do. When I moved here there was a big advertising campaign for McVitie's digestives with the tagline "C'est anglais mais c'est bon": "It's English but it's good". One look at the headlines — "God Save Notre King" above a picture of the national hero Kylian Mbappé; "Prêts à manger du lion" ("Ready to eat lion") — proves we've not gone up much in their estimation.

A French friend told me that he thinks we have the better squad (bar Mbappé), but that we'll let ourselves down with our "fear of succeeding". A typically French example of overanalysis, perhaps? Let's hope he's wrong.

My local café is run by English expatriates, and Bosun, the co-owner, tells me that he'll watch on Saturday with a mix of English and French supporters; personally I like the idea of an English pub on the Left Bank, with other expatriate stragglers. Others have more elaborate plans. One British friend who goes out with a Frenchy has a "sex bet", where each has to do "what the other wants" the night of the match: if France win, he decides; if England win, she does.

Cheering on your team without allies certainly adds a frisson. I'm not usually the sort to go in for ostentatious displays of patriotism, but since our first match the transformation is almost Hulk-like. Something happens when the starting whistle is blown. I find myself shouting vocabulary that I didn't know lived in my psyche ("BOOT IT UP THE PITCH, MAN!").

So come Saturday night, if we lose you'll find me drowning my sorrows in pints. If we win I will inevitably find myself shouting, "IT'S COMING HOME!" at the top of my lungs, because you can take the girl out of England, even permanently, but the hopelessly optimistic England supporter inside lives on.



Hannah Meltzer in Paris with her dog Babbet

> 'You have a good team,' a French friend said. 'You can go home proud'

What to say to win over French fans

"Allez les Bleus" If in doubt, resort to this classic exhortation to the French team: "Come on the Blues".

"Qui ne saute pas n'est pas Français" If you don't jump you're not French, apparently, since that's what this translates as.

"Aux armes, aux armes, nous sommes les Français, et nous allons gagner, allez les Bleus" This Revolution-inspired chant, first used by the Marseilles football club, is a call to arms: "Take up your weapons, we are the French, and we are going to win, come on the Blues."

"Accélération, Mbappé!" What commentators regularly cry as Kylian Mbappé storms up the pitch. You could also learn the hit *Ramenez la coupe à la maison* (bring the trophy home) by French hip-hop artist Vegedream, which includes a line eulogising the speed of the footballer Fifa crowned the world's fastest player.

"Manu le Poulpe!" A phrase used to describe Emmanuel Macron. Since he correctly predicted the score and scorers for France's victory against Poland, supporters have named him Manu the Octopus after a psychic octopus called Paul, who predicted results during the 2010 World Cup.

"On va les plier" Literally "We are going to bend them".

"Aux chiottes, l'arbitre" Think "Go to the toilet, ref" but slightly ruder. If you're feeling feisty, substitute "les Bleus" for "l'arbitre".
Blanca Schofield

KATIE WILSON FOR THE TIMES

Eaten at Ikoyi yet? It's the hottest reservation in Britain



The world's leading chefs speak of Jeremy Chan with reverence — shame it's so hard to get a table at his restaurant, says Tony Turnbull

When your restaurant is booked for months in advance, you have a hundred customers a day on the waiting list, all happy to spend more than £100 a head, and Michelin recently awarded you a second star, conventional wisdom says carry on just as you are. Why, with chill winds sweeping through the industry, throw it all up in the air and risk strangling the golden goose?

But you don't become one of the most influential chefs in the world by standing still. So when Jeremy Chan decided to close his London restaurant Ikoyi for six weeks ahead of a move to a smart new site across town, he chose that precise moment to retire every dish that he has built his reputation on. "To continue with our old standards? It just felt cowardly," he says by way of explanation.

So no more plantain with raspberry salt and smoked scotch bonnet emulsion, no more jollof rice with crab custard, no more peppered lobster crepe or any of the other brightly coloured and intricately spiced dishes that led Giles Coren to call Ikoyi "the opening of the year" in 2017 and have since made it the most oversubscribed restaurant in the capital.

"To be able to tear it all down and start from scratch is really exciting," the 35-year-old says, standing in the new site off the Strand as builders work around him. "I'm a bit of a masochist, so maybe I didn't realise how crazy it was," he adds, "although my team soon told me." After all, it is they as much as he who will be cooking an unfamiliar menu in an unfamiliar kitchen for fully paying customers the moment the doors open next week.

It won't be a complete change of direction, more a refinement, with the new menu drawing as ever on Chan's trademark use of seasonal British produce interpreted through the lens of sub-Saharan flavourings. And at least this time the six-week hiatus will

> **To continue with our old standards? It just felt cowardly**

have allowed the chefs time to familiarise themselves with the new dishes, which is not normally the case. While most two-star restaurants will meticulously tweak new recipes for weeks or months before they make it on to the menu, Chan likes to introduce his creations not just untested but untasted too. "It's almost like I have a blueprint of the dish in my mind and I know exactly what it will taste like and look like," he says. So without even making it himself, he'll write the recipe down, give it to his chefs and tell them to get on with it, sometimes mid-service. "I don't want to spend time analysing or dissecting a new dish. I want my guests to be the first to try it," he says.

Such free-wheeling spontaneity is unheard of in a kitchen at this level, but displays the commitment to experimentation and creativity that has made Chan and Ikoyi such a force to be reckoned with. You may not know his name, but Chan is considered a culinary wunderkind by the world's chefs, spoken of in the same reverential tones as René Redzepi, the visionary owner of Noma in Copenhagen. He is given top billing on the international gastronomic conference circuit where ideas are exchanged and the trends that will eventually filter down to the supermarket shelves are formed. Last year Chan was voted "one to watch" by the World's 50 Best (Ikoyi is one of only two British restaurants on the list) and three-star chefs such as Alain Ducasse and Mitsuhiro Araki beat a regular path to his door. His graphic, geometric style of plating dishes is copied around the world, and at a time when many restaurants struggle to find staff, he has a year-long waiting list of chefs desperate to gain unpaid work experience in his kitchen.





Jeremy Chan, right, with Ikoyi co-founder Iré Hassan-Odukale. Above right: a revamp of their signature plantain dish

It all feels a long way away from when Chan opened Ikoyi five years ago. He had come late to cooking, having first used his first-class degree from Princeton to go into finance and, despite time with Claude Bosi at Hibiscus and Heston Blumenthal at Dinner, he admits he never stood out as a chef. He was about to throw in the towel when his childhood friend Iré Hassan-Odukale suggested they open a loosely Nigerian-inspired restaurant. The problem was that while Chan, son of a Chinese father and Canadian mother, made no claim to be cooking authentic African food, merely to be using African ingredients as a springboard for his own creativity, customers assumed that a restaurant named after an upmarket suburb of Lagos would be serving traditional Nigerian food. "If they want to serve jollof, they could start by sacking the Chinese chef and getting a Nigerian in," ran a typically dismissive Tripadvisor review.

It was a disastrous start. "We were empty, empty," Chan recalls, "serving maybe one guest for lunch and a couple for dinner. I felt like I'd been handed a gift when Iré connected me with all these new ingredients such as scotch bonnet chillies, uda peppercorns, locust beans and dried shellfish and I just wanted to celebrate them. Our customers hadn't made the connection with what we were trying to do though, which was both frustrating and stressful."

Within a year, Michelin had recognised Ikoyi for dishes such as tigernut mousse with caviar, or melon with salted crayfish, and he gained a strong following among chefs and critics, but the reservations book remained stubbornly empty. "Araki-san came in when we had three customers. I was crestfallen but we made him an incredible meal and he

loved it. Another time Magnus Nilsson [then of two-star Faviken in Sweden] came, and again I felt so embarrassed and ashamed that he'd heard of us and made the journey and we were empty."

Chan's typically counter-intuitive response was to up the ante. "We were doing an averagely priced à la carte at the time, so I decided the only way to survive was to go into overdrive. We'd make the food so incredible they would have to come."

With his mantra that an open mind can lead to all sorts of incredible possibilities, he created hundreds of new dishes in a surge of creativity, such that "if you came a couple of times a year over those five years, you'll have eaten in ten different restaurants. I spent a long time trying to de-categorise the cooking. I wanted the food to become its own reference point. That's what originality is all about."

> We were serving maybe one guest for lunch and a couple for dinner

Gradually he turned the restaurant around and Michelin duly rewarded him with a second star in January and that was the turning point. He's barely had an empty table since.

The move to the larger new restaurant, which he describes as a monolithic, sculptural space, at once "cosy, but intense", will allow him "to look after guests the way we want to. We had squeezed all we could out of the previous place."

If you want to come, it will be on Chan's terms: 28 covers, no vegetarian or vegan options, just Monday to Friday, with the last sitting at 7pm. The eight-course set dinner costs £300; lunch ranges between £120 and £180. You don't need me to tell you that that is a lot, even by London standards, but evening slots book out two months ahead, the moment reservations are opened. December and January are full.

"I think of the new restaurant as a reinterpretation of the old one," Chan says. "Iré and I are older, calmer, less stressed out and the menu will reflect that. There will be less spice and heat, and more complexity of flavour."

He will still be challenging diners' palates. "I know there are a few things on the menu that will push people, and I'm OK with that." He thinks his new plantain dish is one. "Previously it was about heat. The new one is about the layering of flavour." The plantain is brushed with ginger paste and powdered peanut brittle, while the bright green emulsion is made of fresh herbs infused with peppercorn. "So there's freshness, tongue-tingling spice, sweetness, nuttiness, all a bit medicinal…

"The intention behind every dish is deliciousness, but I want guests to feel the intensity and that can push people in different directions. Spice is part of our weaponry. It's not just a quick hit of chilli, it has a rounded depth to it. It is that that gives you that warm, comforting feeling. That's what is unique about Ikoyi."

Ikoyi reopens on Monday at 180 Strand, London WC2 (020 3583 4660; ikoyilondon.com)

Old grounds in cakes, flat champagne for vinegar. Our top food waste tips

By Sarah Rainey

Are you a user-upper… or a chucker? Is your fridge full of cheese rinds, lemon halves and wilted herbs which, despite the best of intentions, you know are destined for the bin? Well, you're not alone. Britain is a nation of food wasters: we throw away 4.3 million tonnes of perfectly edible food each year, worth £800 a household. It's the equivalent of eight uneaten meals every week.

And our shameful habit is at its worst at this time of year. The investment website Up the Gains predicts that we will chuck out 27 per cent of the food we buy for Christmas dinner.

So what can you do instead? Well, there are plenty of suggestions for using up scraps and leftovers — some of which are genuinely delicious, even if you might balk at the idea of them. Nigella Lawson's banana skin curry from *Cook, Eat, Repeat* immediately springs to mind here — and before you ask, yes, she says that you can store the skins in your freezer until you're ready to use them.

If, like the domestic goddess, food waste for you is a "legitimate cause for guilt", here's our guide to making meals, snacks and even cakes from food that you didn't think you'd ever eat.



SHUTTERSTOCK

Unfinished champagne can be turned into vinegar. Below: Nadiya Hussain, Jamie Oliver and Nigella Lawson all have waste-saving ideas

Condiments

Flat champagne vinegar Don't pour undrunk champagne or wine down the sink. Adam Handling from the Michelin-starred restaurant Frog suggests collecting the dregs in a container in the fridge until you have 1 litre. Mix with 100ml raw cider vinegar and pour into a glass jar. "Leave for at least six weeks, tasting every so often," he says.

Veg scrap seasoning Make "garum", an ancient Roman condiment, to save veg peel, cores and stalks destined for the compost. Whizz them in a blender, add sea salt and koji, an Asian fermented rice mix, and cover with water in a sealed jar. Leave for 8-10 months to ferment and use to add depth to sauces and stews.

Old mushroom parmesan Will Murray, co-founder of the London restaurant Fallow, says mushrooms make a great substitute for parmesan on risotto. "Take three raw button mushrooms — knobbly ones that have fallen out in the veg drawer — and grate them over it for a beautiful, fresh, floral earthiness."

Baking

Coffee ground brownies Keep used coffee grounds in an airtight container in the fridge and add them to your usual brownie batter (use half as much as you do cocoa powder) for a subtle caffeine kick. Sprinkle more on top before baking for crunch.

Mashed potato cake Made too much mashed potato? Fear not: Victoria Glass, author of *Too Good to Waste*, suggests whipping up a sponge by combining them with butter, sugar, flour, eggs and ground almonds. "Potatoes might not scream afternoon tea, but trust me," she says.

Bread crust pudding Turn discarded crusts into a crunchy, golden bread-and-butter pudding by chopping them up, mixing with raisins or chocolate chips, and covering in custard before baking. If you're craving something cold, try Mary Berry's brown-bread ice cream, made by combining stale offcuts with condensed milk, double cream and sugar.

Snacks

Use-up-anything In the crisp world, potatoes are passé. Instead, keep cauliflower leaves, sprout peelings and pumpkin or squash skin, drizzle with good-quality oil and roast for 15 minutes until sizzling. You can also make scratchings from salmon, pork or chicken skin: pat it dry, season with herbs and bake for 30 minutes.

Candied citrus peel Boil the peel from citrus fruit — lemons, oranges or grapefruits — in a pan filled with equal parts sugar and water, then dry it in a low oven for two hours. "This thrifty recipe will take buns, biscuits and bakes to the next level," says Jamie Oliver. Candied peel also makes a tasty snack dipped in dark chocolate.

Mains

Banana skin burgers Nigella isn't the only one who slips banana skins into her meals. Heretical as it may sound to meat-eaters, some vegans use them in place of bacon rashers in fry-ups, while the *Bake Off* winner Nadiya Hussain employs them in a veggie version of a barbecue favourite. Shred the peel from 2-3 ripe bananas and fry it in a hot pan with chopped onion, garlic and a few tablespoons of BBQ sauce or sriracha. "Stick it in a burger and you have pulled pork," Nadiya says.

Everything stock Ideal for parmesan rinds, onion peel, potato skins and herb stalks, as well as bones, fat and skin from leftover meat, "everything stock" is the ultimate fridge-clearer. Simply simmer, then strain. Add ginger peel for spice, the dregs of a chutney jar for sweetness or a spoonful of Marmite for savouriness.

Fridge dump pasta sauce Bash, mash and grate all the vegetable odds and ends you can find — carrots, celery, courgette, peppers, cabbage; anything will do. A leftovers take on Jamie's seven-veg sauce, sauté them in a pan with olive oil and seasoning, add a few glugs of passata, and spoon on top of al dente pasta.

Sides and dips

Carrot top pesto Blend the leafy tops of carrots with whatever herbs you have. Add olive oil, a handful of nuts, grated cheese and a squeeze of lemon juice for fresh, zesty pesto guaranteed to elevate your penne.

Bacon fat mayo If you can bring yourself to keep the fat that oozes off your bacon (let it solidify and scrape it into a jar), make bacon mayonnaise: delicious for dipping chips or smeared inside a burger bun. Mix an egg yolk with a teaspoon each of mustard and lemon juice, before adding half a cup of liquid bacon fat and blending.

Apple skin slaw Add crunch and tang to coleslaw by using discarded apple or pear skin, shredded and mixed with your usual mayonnaise. You can also combine chopped fruit peel with leftover mash and fry spoonfuls of the mixture to make crispy rostis.



arts

What I think will happen in The White Lotus

Ben Dowell predicts how the season showdown will play out on Monday

FABIO LOVINO/HBO



What is Quentin up to?
Tom Hollander's Englishman is a conman, right? Tanya's new gay best friend, with his palazzo parties, opera tickets and charming manners, is fishy. Is this sybarite really a serpent in paradise? First, he's too good to be true. Second, Tanya (Jennifer Coolidge) has a lot of money (half a billion dollars, she has told us) and Quentin is skint. The final episode is called Byg, slang in some quarters for "Because You're Gay". Will the action hinge on Tanya's assistant Portia's discovery that Jack (Leo Woodall) and Quentin have sex? In the trailer for the final episode, Portia (Hayley Lu Richardson) is shown suspecting something is awry and expressing a determination to return to her boss. Will she bump off Jack? Or save Tanya and die in the process?

Who is the man in Quentin's photo?
Who was that person in a cowboy hat in the photograph Tanya found before enjoying the attentions of the well-hung gigolo whom Quentin had so generously procured? It looked like Greg (Jon Gries), Tanya's shifty husband who has left the hotel. Quentin had already told her he fell in love with a "cowboy" in Wyoming. Is Greg in on a scam to get Tanya's money? When Tanya was engaged in sexual congress, eagle-eyed viewers caught a glimpse of a red light. Was she being filmed? Is there an infidelity clause in the Greg/Tanya prenup they are trying to exploit? It's worth remembering how angry Greg was when he discovered Tanya had brought her assistant, Portia, on the holiday. Perhaps Jack was brought in by the plotters to distract Portia. In episode six, Jack took Portia away from the party, so they could work on Tanya. Quentin watched the pair head off with a studied look in his eye.

Is Lucia conning Albie?
There's something that doesn't add up about Lucia (Simona Tabasco). It's not the way she plies her trade as a sex worker; it's the way she seems to be working Albie, the Di Grasso lad played by Adam DiMarco. When we first met her with her friend Mia she seemed to be working for herself. But there have been two occasions where she has had what looks like a very theatrically angry encounter with the shadowy Alessio, prompting her to speak regretfully about the power he has over her. Keen-eyed viewers have already noticed that she interacted with Alessio at the start of the drama on what seemed like quite amicable terms. He might be her brother or her boyfriend. Is she setting Albie up to play on his liberal sympathies to extricate herself from a fake threat?

Will Cameron die?
There is a good chance Tanya survives. The trailer seems to show her waving on the hotel boat, possibly leaving her holiday. Probably most people's favoured candidate for the floating corpse is the obnoxious Cameron (Theo James). The trailer for the final episode shows Ethan (Will Sharpe), racked with suspicions that Cameron had sex with his wife, Harper (Aubrey Plaza), punching Cameron and wrestling with him in the sea, but this could be a red herring. If Cameron dies, a more plausible candidate for his killer is his wife, Daphne (Meghann Fahy). We know she survived as she was the one who ran petrified out of the water in the first scene of the series. Did she dispatch him? There is also a theory that her jolliness in that opening scene with the new arrivals was a clever way of getting an alibi. Plus, the picture she showed Harper suggests her children bear a resemblance, not to Cameron but to her personal trainer with "blond hair and big blue eyes".

Are there clues in the cultural references?
Quentin took Tanya to see *Madama Butterfly*, Puccini's story of betrayal, passion and death. There is also a theory about *The Godfather*. In episode three, the Di Grassos and Portia eat lunch at the location where Francis Ford Coppola shot the car bombing scene in which Michael Corleone's wife dies in an explosion. She is not the intended target. Later, Portia is seen wearing a *Godfather* T-shirt, despite saying she had not seen the film. Will the Quentin plot go wrong and will Portia get it in the neck (or explode in a car)? Another reference is in the vases dotted about the hotel that offer reminders of a Sicilian legend, the Testa di Moro, about a woman who killed her Moorish lover when she found out he was married. "Because he lied to her, she cut his head off," one of the hotel staff explains. Mmm…





From top: Ethan (Will Sharpe) and Cameron (Theo James); Lucia (Simona Tabasco) and Mia (Beatrice Granno); and Tanya (Jennifer Coolidge)

What happened to the piano player?
The resort pianist Giuseppe's lust for aspiring singer Mia (Beatrice Granno) led to a mishap with a pill he thought was Viagra that put him in hospital.

Mia has seduced Valentina (Sabrina Impacciatore) and now has a longed-for role singing to the guests. Giuseppe (Federico Scribani) has motive for revenge. Also, Valentina, a ball of sexual frustration, may feel aggrieved with Mia for seducing her to get the hotel gig. The big stories could be a distraction. Never forget the minor characters. And we know Valentina survives.

Is it something more mundane?
F Murray Abraham's Bert Di Grasso is 80, has had a fall and is, he says, "concussed". Maybe he just has a funny turn and drowns? In the first series, the death was an accident. Perhaps Cameron gets angry with Lucia, who wants her cash, and Albie comes from behind, mistakes Cameron for a pimp and lashes out? It is also possible that Albie finds out about Lucia's scheming and kills her in a crime of passion. In *White Lotus* world it's always the rich who get the pleasure and the poor the pain. My money's on Lucia and Portia ending up on the slab. Not long now…

***The White Lotus* is on Sky Atlantic on Monday at 9pm and on demand in the day**



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Rock star? I looked like a teacher

Steve Harley tells Will Hodgkinson about Bolan, Bowie, being No 1 with Make Me Smile and why he still loves touring

Arranging to meet Steve Harley at a little French café in Soho, central London, called Maison Bertaux brings the memories flooding back. His, not mine. "I used to drink next door at the Coach & Horses," Harley says of the period in the mid-1970s when he brought a new kind of florid theatricality to rock with his band Cockney Rebel. "Lucian Freud would be in there all day, drinking until he fell off his stool, and at the time I was hanging out with Marc Bolan, who was always 'on'. In 1974, by which point I was quite famous, I went for lunch with Marc and David Bowie on the Kings Road. A coachload of teenage girls pulled up, banging on the windows and screaming. It was all for Marc. They completely ignored me and David." He still sounds a little miffed about it.

At 71, walking with a stick after a broken hip compounded the mobility problems he has faced since contracting polio as a toddler, Harley has proved to be a lot more enduring than Bolan, if not as famous. We're meeting on the eve of his UK tour. In 2020 he released *Uncovered*, an album of acoustic versions of his favourite songs, and *Make Me Smile (Come Up and See Me)*, the 1975 No 1 he wrote as revenge against his former bandmates after a massive falling out, remains one of the most beloved songs of the modern age. Yet to this day he suffers from something Bolan was never afflicted with: impostor syndrome.

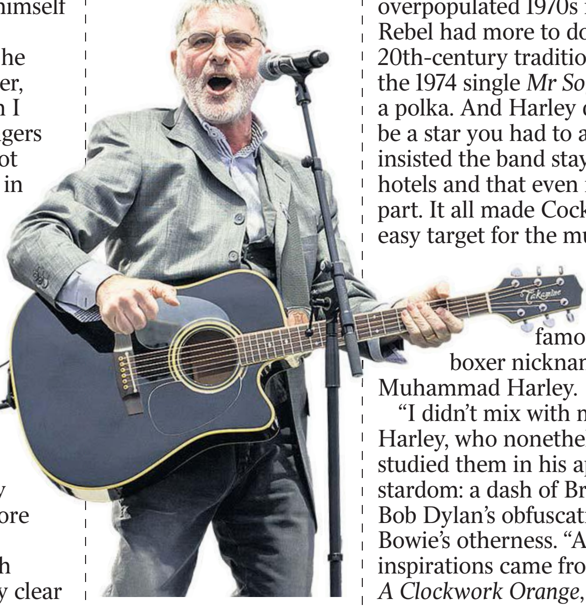
"Marc and I were diametrically opposed," Harley says of Bolan, about whom he wrote Cockney Rebel's tale of outrageous vanity *Mirror Freak*. "I looked like a geography teacher even then. He acted like a star at all times. And he lived on Fantasy Island. In 1975 I was at No 1 with *Make Me Smile* and Marc was going around saying his latest single was outselling mine by 20,000 copies."

Perhaps this feeling of never quite belonging in the pop world comes from Harley starting out on the other side of the press divide. Growing up in New Cross, southeast London, the grammar school-educated son of a milkman and a jazz singer was confined to hospital for much of his childhood as he underwent surgery to counteract the effects of polio. He passed the time by discovering DH Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, TS Eliot and Bob Dylan. He went on to spend his late teens and early twenties as a reporter for various local newspapers. It was only in 1972, when he got the sack from the East London Advertiser and the future *Richard and Judy* presenter Richard Madeley took his job, that Harley committed himself to music full time.



LFI

Steve Harley with Cockney Rebel in the 1970s. Below: on tour more recently



"In my heart I'm still a hack," he says. "My mum was a great singer, I got a guitar from my dad when I was 12, but I always had inky fingers and my idols were journalists, not musicians, which came through in the songwriting. When I was young and angry and thought I could rule the world, I definitely packed the first two Cockney Rebel albums with stories of characters. They were all real, I just changed the names, and covering stories along Mile End Road in the East End around the time the Krays were put away in 1968 gave me plenty of material. I had lived a life before I became famous."

When Harley did go for it with Cockney Rebel, he set out a very clear plan. Initially there were no guitars. The early song *Tumbling Down* contained the line "Oh dear, look what they've done to the blues", a put-down of the denim-clad virtuosos who overpopulated 1970s music. Cockney Rebel had more to do with early 20th-century traditions than rock — the 1974 single *Mr Soft* even featured a polka. And Harley decided that to be a star you had to act like one. He insisted the band stay in the best hotels and that even roadies look the part. It all made Cockney Rebel an easy target for the music press — the NME in particular, which in tribute to the famously cocksure boxer nicknamed the singer Muhammad Harley.

"I didn't mix with musicians," says Harley, who nonetheless had clearly studied them in his approach to stardom: a dash of Bryan Ferry's style, Bob Dylan's obfuscation and David Bowie's otherness. "A lot of the lyrical inspirations came from *Cabaret* and *A Clockwork Orange*, so I was operating in a different world. But I got on with most of them. I found most stars to be pretty nice people… apart from Madonna."

As for *Make Me Smile*, Harley wrote it after Cockney Rebel's violinist John Crocker, bassist Paul Jeffreys and keyboardist Milton Reame-James demanded more money and a greater involvement in songwriting. It led to a big row and the band leaving Harley. He went on to score the biggest hit of his career without them: a pyrrhic victory, arguably, given that he was fated to relive a moment of bitterness as a concert highlight for ever more.

"They left me in the lurch," Harley says, baldly. "They came to me at the Piccadilly hotel in Manchester on the last night of a 44-date sold-out tour with this ultimatum I couldn't reconcile. They wanted to write songs, but I had already written the next album. They wanted more money, but the money hadn't come through yet."

"I found most stars to be nice people… apart from Madonna

It was only a decade ago that Harley owned up to the subject of the song, which, if you don't study the words too closely, could be taken as a tale of illicit afternoon tryst. "It's a finger poker, so I gave it the 'ooh la-la-la's to disguise that. To me the meaning was obvious, with the line, 'For only metal, what a bore' so clearly being about money, but nobody realised." Did the old band members know?

"I never talked to them about it. I did stay friendly with Paul Jeffreys until he died [Jeffreys was on Pan Am Flight 103, which was blown up over Lockerbie in 1988], but the song took on a life of its own."

Rod Stewart once credited Harley as being one of the greatest songwriters of his generation. It has been a while, however, since he released an album of entirely original material.

"Oh yes, there was a time…" he says, and sighs with theatrical wistfulness for a lost period when the songs just kept coming. "When you're young and full of it there is no shortage of material. As you get older you become your own worst critic. You filter things out before they happen."

What is left is the desire to be on stage with the band, with a new line-up, 50 years after Cockney Rebel broke through. "Touring is so much better now," he says. "Once you toured to sell records, but now it is the other way round. It is a solitary life, and you have to enjoy your own company, but I like packing a suitcase. I like spending the day going to a museum or walking along the river. When lockdown happened, I told my son that I didn't know who I was any more and he said: 'Well, you are my dad.' It's not in my nature to feel sorry for myself, but this is who I am."

Steve Harley & Cockney Rebel are at De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea, on Saturday, then touring

times2

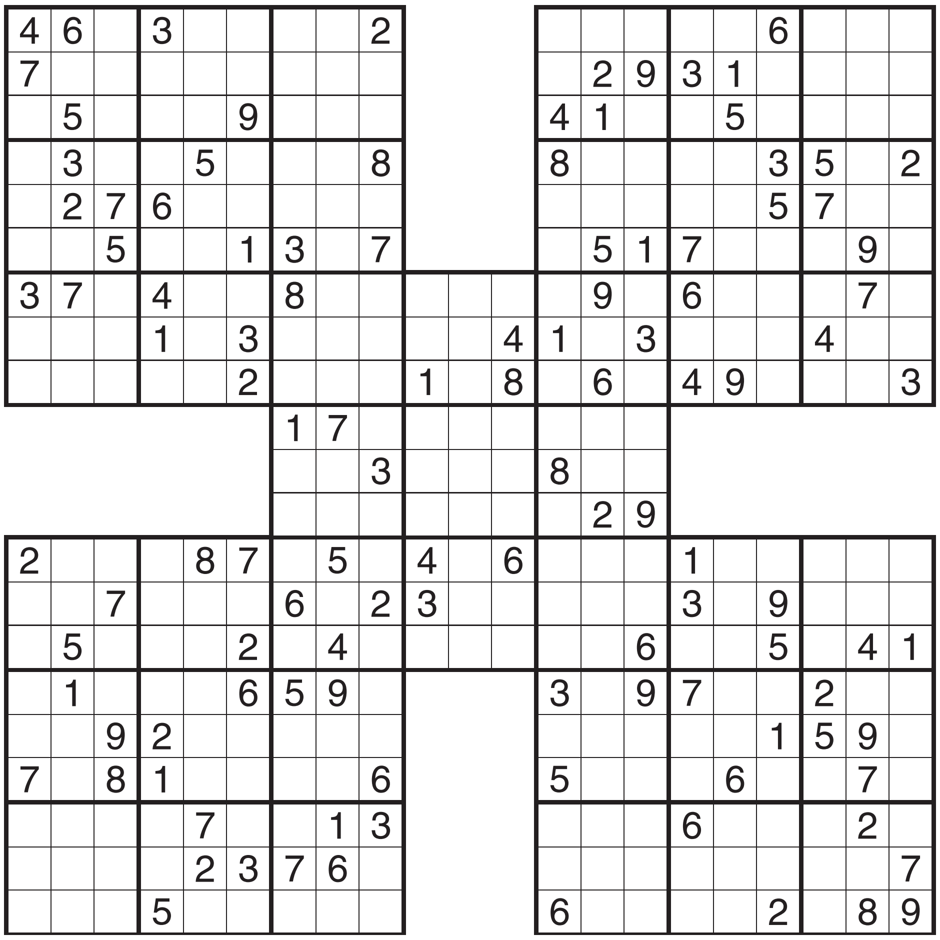
Your weekday brain boost

More puzzles Pages 14-16

Every day, Monday to Thursday, a page of extra puzzles to give your brain an extended workout

Samurai medium

Fill each grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Where the puzzles overlap, the rows and columns do not go beyond their usual length.

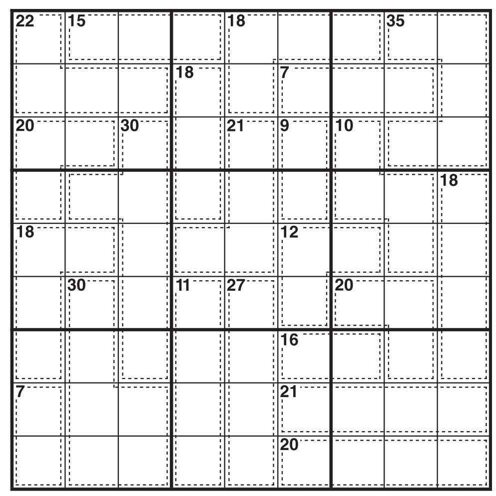


Sudoku difficult

	4				9			
		3				5	1	6
		1						
	5	4	1		2			
8			9		4			5
			6		3	4	9	
						2		
3	8	7				6		
			7				8	

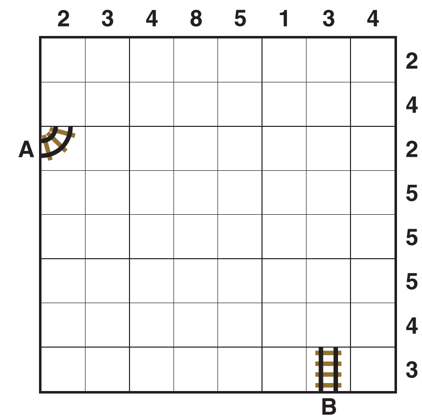
Killer deadly

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.



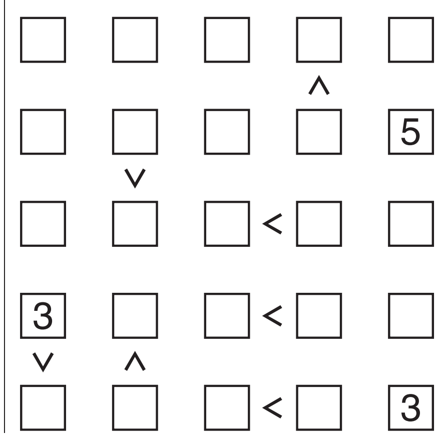
Train Tracks

Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of rail go in each row and column. There are only straight rails and curved rails. The track cannot cross itself.



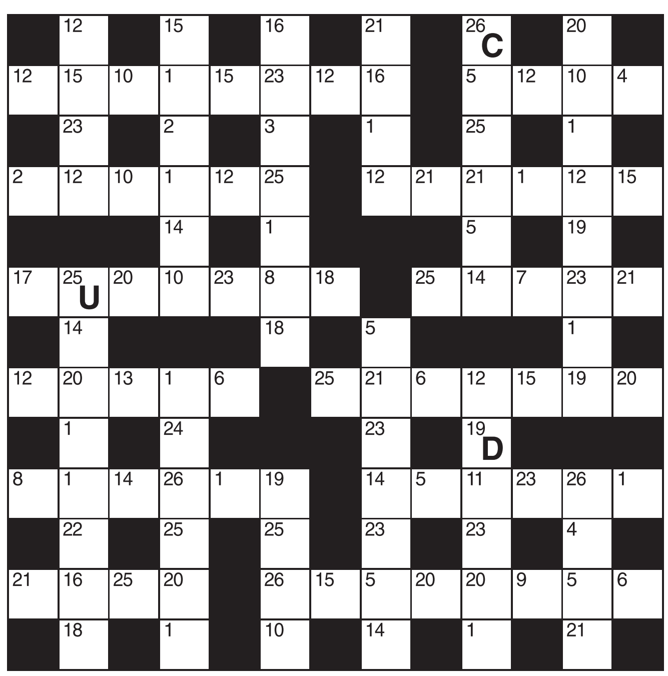
Futoshiki

Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

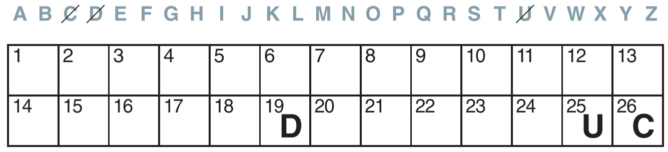


Codeword

Every letter in the crossword-style grid, right, has been substituted for a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded.



A B ~~C~~ ~~D~~ E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T ~~U~~ V W X Y Z



Quintagram®

Solve all five cryptic clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Idiot's gooseberry dessert? (4)

_ _ _ _

2 Beginning to crack: bone china defect? (4)

_ _ _ _

3 Give up the harvest (5)

_ _ _ _ _

4 Start out with menu change (9)

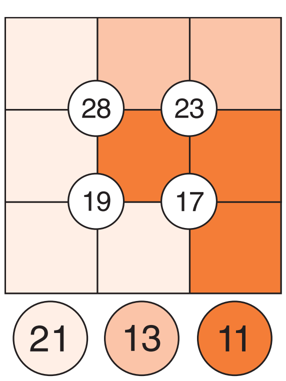
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

5 Film star seen in clubs in Soho drunk, cavorting (4,6)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

A	C	C	D	D	E	E	F
H	H	I	I	K	L	L	M
N	N	O	O	O	O	P	R
R	S	S	T	T	U	U	Y

Suko

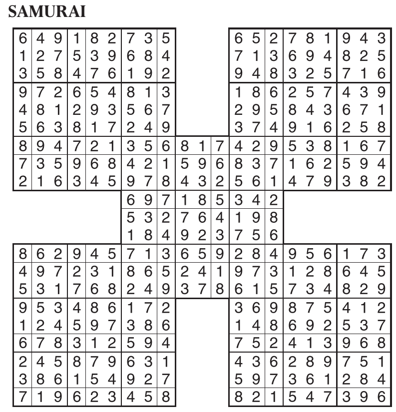


Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

Solutions in Monday's Times2

Yesterday's solutions

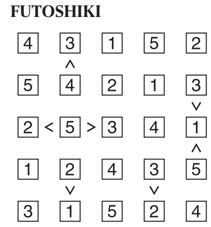
SAMURAI



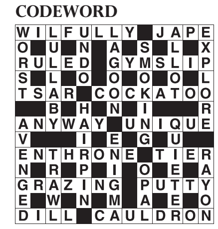
QUINTAGRAM

1 Lung
2 Arrest
3 Madrid
4 Mandolin
5 Supplied

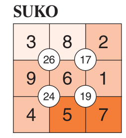
FUTOSHIKI



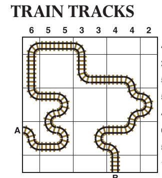
CODEWORD



SUKO



TRAIN TRACKS



SUDOKU

3	6	2	8	5	9	1	4	7
4	9	1	2	7	6	5	3	8
5	8	7	3	1	4	2	6	9
1	7	6	9	4	8	3	2	5
2	4	5	7	6	3	9	8	1
8	3	9	1	2	5	6	7	4
9	1	3	6	8	7	4	5	2
7	2	4	5	3	1	8	9	6
6	5	8	4	9	2	7	1	3

KILLER

3	5	6	1	7	9	8	4	2
8	2	1	3	4	6	7	5	9
7	4	9	8	5	2	1	6	3
9	8	7	2	6	3	4	1	5
1	3	5	9	8	4	2	7	6
4	6	2	7	1	5	9	3	8
5	7	8	6	2	1	3	9	4
6	1	3	4	9	8	5	2	7
2	9	4	5	3	7	6	8	1

Comedy genius — and meticulous archivist

Carol Midgley
TV review



Spike Milligan: The Unseen Archive
Sky Arts/Now
★★★★☆

Rosie Molloy Gives Up Everything
Sky Comedy/Now
★★★★☆

I'm sure everyone of a certain age remembers the golden TV moment when, presented with a glowing tribute from his ardent fan Prince Charles, Spike Milligan called him a "little grovelling bastard". He later faxed the prince to ask: "I suppose a knighthood's out of the question?" It wasn't — he got one six years later. It's likely also that most people know Milligan was plagued by bipolar disorder and that the mania helped to fuel his absurdist, surreal comedy.

However, "meticulous archivist" probably wouldn't be your go-to description of a genius who broke the sketch show mould. Milligan's vast, lovingly kept treasure trove of material formed the backbone of **Spike Milligan: The Unseen Archive**, and offered a fresh insight into his life through unmade scripts, a children's play, a musical, sketches and home movies, all filed away neatly as if he hoped they might be enjoyed, maybe even made, after he'd gone.

That the BBC didn't employ him in his later years rankled ("There's a tendency not to f***ing like me at the BBC"; he blamed his not going to Oxford), and he'd sketched a show in which he would play himself as a man who "cannot stand *Blackadder*" (sounds funny — pity they didn't make it).

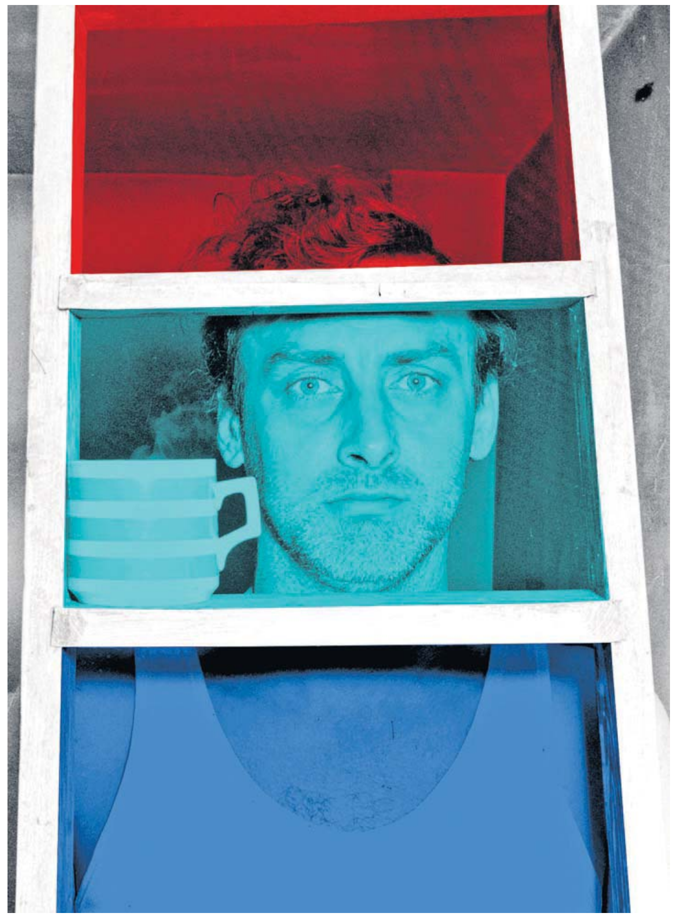
They got celebrities to hail his genius, Joanna Lumley remarking that it was a privilege to know him, though "sometimes he could be bad, then next day he'd send a bunch of flowers". Eddie Izzard said fans enjoyed "getting" his comedy since it was "for people who are clever enough and advanced enough to know what's going on. Some very straight people wouldn't get it" — which sounded a tad superior.

It didn't swerve the icky parts of his career, such as when he blacked up to play a Pakistani man, which clearly discomfited his daughters. And it offered a glimpse of how fragile he was, how success in *The Goon Show* didn't make him happy. His mental illness stemmed from when he was hit by a mortar shell in the Second World War. Al Murray said he wasn't keen on the idea that "madness and genius" are two sides of the same coin, but felt that without the war "we wouldn't have had the Milligan we got".

Some vehicles work better for Sheridan Smith than others, but **Rosie Molloy Gives Up Everything** is a rocket for her talent. A tour de force, it's centred on a woman addicted to booze/cigarettes/drugs/sugar/caffeine, but smashing it at work and being very amusing. There are lines such as: "I once went on a silent retreat and got fingered by a monk." It was perhaps unfortunately timed given that on BBC2 there was a documentary about Alcoholics Anonymous.

However, it was un-po-faced and unpreachy about addiction. Even her father (Ardal O'Hanlon), when given a terminal diagnosis of heart disease, refused to give up the drink and fags. When she offered to pay £30,000 for him to go private, he said cheerily: "I'm not worth thirty grand!" His wife (Pauline McLynn) wholeheartedly agreed. Its irreverence probably won't please some. Rosie Molloy is a mess, but a damn funny one.

YETI TELEVISION



A wealth of material gave us fresh insight into Spike Milligan

Radio choice
Joe Clay



Bells That Still Can Ring
Radio 4, 11.30am

John Taylor & Co in Loughborough is the only big bell foundry left in the UK, famed for forging "Great Paul", the bell that chimes at St Paul's Cathedral (and the largest ever produced in Britain). The foundry has been based on its present site since 1859 and in this fascinating programme, Andres Williams hears the stories of some of the bells that were produced there. They include AC/DC's "hell's bell", which crashed through the stage at Nassau Coliseum in New York, and the tumbling bells that alerted people to a fire started by an arsonist in a southwest London church.

OUR TV NEWSLETTER
Sign up to a weekly briefing of the only shows you need to watch
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Times Radio
Digital, web, smart speaker, app
5.00am Anna Cunningham with Early Breakfast **6.00** Aasmah Mir and Stig Abell with Times Radio Breakfast. Wake up to news, politics and entertaining conversation **10.00** Patrick Maguire **1.00pm** Mariella Frostrup. Cultural guests and big thinkers **3.00** Jane Garvey and Fi Glover. Jane and Fi's trademark entertaining style plus live discussion of the day's news **5.00** John Pienaar with Times Radio Drive. Conversation with political and economic guests **7.00** Pienaar and Friends. Informed debate with leading figures **8.00** The Evening Edition with Kait Borsay **10.00** Henry Bonsu **1.00am** Stories of Our Times **1.30** Red Box **2.00** Highlights from Times Radio

Radio 2
FM: 88-90.2 MHz
6.30am The Zoe Ball Breakfast Show **9.30** Ken Bruce **12.00** Jeremy Vine **2.00pm** Scott Mills **4.00** Sara Cox **6.30** Sara Cox's Half Wower **7.00** Jo Whiley's Shiny Happy Playlist. Jo plays her favourite album tracks and musical gems **7.30** Jo Whiley. A mix of new music and classic tracks **9.00** The Country Show with Bob Harris. A selection of music from across the generations **10.00** Trevor Nelson's Magnificent 7. Seven of Rhythm Nation's biggest hits, uplifting tunes and essential throwbacks **10.30** Trevor Nelson's Rhythm Nation. The DJ introduces a mix of R'n'B and soulful tunes **12.00** Phil Williams **2.30am** One Hit Wonders with OJ Borg (r) **3.00** Sounds of the 90s with Fearne Cotton (r) **4.00** A Dance Through the Decades **4.30** Early Breakfast Show

Radio 3
FM: 90.2-92.4 MHz
6.30am Breakfast
Petroc Trelawny presents Radio 3's classical breakfast show, featuring listener requests
9.00 Essential Classics
Georgia Mann plays the best in classical music with familiar favourites, new discoveries and the occasional surprise
12.00 Composer of the Week: Franck (1822-1890)
Donald Macleod examines Franck's unorthodox methods and why he was to become such a revered teacher. (*Les plaintes de la poupée*; Violin Sonata, op 23. I; Prélude, Choral et Fugue, M21; Les Béatitudes. No 2: Selig sind die sanftmutigen (Blessed are the meek); and *Le Chasseur maudit*)
1.00pm Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert
Hannah French presents the celebrated pianist, Elisabeth Leonskaja, performing Schubert's monumental final work for piano, his Sonata in B-flat. Recorded at LSO St Luke's in September. Schubert (Klavierstück No.1 (from 3 Klavierstücke D. 946); and Sonata in B-flat, D 960
2.00 Afternoon Concert
The BBC Philharmonic plays Strauss. Plus, music by Schubert from 2021's Schubertiade. Presented by Penny Gore. Hans Krasa (Overture for Small Orchestra); Schubert (Rondo in A, D. 951); Tallis (Spem in Alium); Dvorak (Carnival Overture); JS Bach (Auf Christi Himmelfahrt allein, BWV 128, cantata); Strauss (Der Rosenkavalier Suite); Schubert (Impromptu in E flat, D 899/2; Impromptu in G flat, D 899/3; and Mass No. 6 in E flat, D. 950: Credo); and Walton (*Troilus & Cressida* suite)
5.00 In Tune
The Chiaroscuro Quartet perform live in the studio for presenter Katie Derham ahead of their concerts at the Turner Sims Concert Hall in Southampton and Wigmore Hall in London, plus there is the latest arts news from across the classical music world
7.00 In Tune Mixtape
An eclectic mix of music, featuring old favourites together with lesser-known gems
7.30 Radio 3 in Concert
The BBC Singers are joined by their newly titled Artist in Association, the South African cellist Abel Selaocoe, to perform Sofia Gubaidulina's mystical *Canticle of the Sun*. Followed by Rachmaninov's setting of texts from the All Night Vigil ceremony — also known as the "Vespers". Presented by Ian Skelly, recorded at Kings Place in London
10.00 Free Thinking
Television drama *It's a Sin* was praised for its depiction of living with Aids. Russell T Davies is joined by his friend and the author of *Love from the Pink Palace* Jill Nalder and the psychiatrist Sabina Dosani
10.45 The Essay: A Landscape for Recovery
The writer, artist and psychologist Louise Kenward describes her relationship with the sea and how this influences her health at Bexhill-on-Sea on the south coast of England
11.00 Compline
A reflective service of night prayer for the second week of Advent from St Paul's Church, Withington, Manchester
11.30 Unclassified
Get lost inside musical loops and ambient worlds selected by Elizabeth Alker
12.30am Through the Night (r)

Radio 4
FM: 92.4-94.6 MHz LW: 198kHz MW: 720 kHz
5.30am News Briefing
5.43 Prayer for the Day
5.45 Farming Today
5.58 Tweet of the Day (r)
6.00 Today
With Nick Robinson and Mishal Husain
8.31 (LW) Yesterday in Parliament
9.00 In Our Time
A discussion about the causes and early consequences of the 1798 Irish rebellion
9.45 (LW) Daily Service
9.45 Book of the Week: Night Terrors
By Alice Vernon (4/5)
10.00 Woman's Hour
Topical debate offering a female perspective on the world presented by Emma Barnett
11.00 Crossing Continents
Current affairs reports (3/10)
11.30 Bells That Still Can Ring
A look at the only major bell foundry left in the UK, John Taylor & Co in Leicestershire.
See Radio Choice
12.01pm (LW) Shipping Forecast
12.04 You and Yours
12.32 Sliced Bread
Greg Foot and guests search for the scientific evidence behind a product's bold claims (6/7)
1.00 The World at One
1.45 Please Protect Abraham
After digital threats seem to manifest into physical ones for Abraham, he maps out his own route to safety (4/10)
2.00 The Archers (r)
2.15 Drama: Patterdale
By Paul Jones, starring Oscar Tyndall (r)
3.00 Open Country
The history of the Mendip Hills (9/16)
3.27 Radio 4 Appeal
On behalf of the work of St Martin-in-the-Fields with homeless people (r)
3.30 Bookclub
James Naughtie is joined by the writer AJ Pearce and a group of listeners (r)
4.00 The Infinite Monkey Cage
Brian Cox and Robin Ince tackle their experiences of ageing (4/7) (r)
4.30 BBC Inside Science
The latest scientific research
5.00 PM
5.54 (LW) Shipping Forecast
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 ReincarNathan
Nathan is brought back to life as queen of a huge leafcutter ant colony (4/6)
7.00 The Archers
Leonard attempts to do the right thing and Chelsea has big plans
7.15 Front Row
Arts programme with news and reviews
8.00 The Briefing Room
David Aaronovitch is joined by guests to discuss big issues in the news (3/15)
8.30 Only After Dark
Dan Richards boards the night ferry between Shetland and mainland Scotland (1/3)
9.00 BBC Inside Science (r)
9.30 In Our Time (r)
10.00 The World Tonight
With James Coomarasamy
10.45 Book at Bedtime: The Ice Palace
By Tarjei Vesaas (4/5)
11.00 The Shuttleworths
Part two of two. Graham Fellows' comic creation John Shuttleworth continues his quest for fame as a singer-songwriter
11.30 Today in Parliament
12.00 News and Weather
12.30am Book of the Week: Night Terrors (r)
12.48 Shipping Forecast
1.00 As BBC World Service

Radio 4 Extra
Digital only
8.00am The Burkiss Way **8.30** The Older Woman **9.00** The Unbelievable Truth **9.30** Clare in the Community **10.00** Alexander **11.00** Peril at End House **11.30** Master and Commander **12.00** Dearest Squirrel **12.15pm** A Passage to India **12.30** Hazelbeach **1.00** The Burkiss Way **1.30** The Older Woman **2.00** The Unbelievable Truth **2.30** Clare in the Community **3.00** Alexander **4.00** Peril at End House **4.30** Master and Commander **5.00** Dearest Squirrel **5.15** A Passage to India **5.30** Hazelbeach **6.00** The Burkiss Way **6.30** The Older Woman **7.00** The Unbelievable Truth. With Richard Osman, Holly Walsh, Luisa Omielan and Jack Dee **7.30** Clare in the Community **8.00** I Write The Gags. Barry Cryer is in conversation with Steve Wright. Last in the series **9.00** Unreal: A Critical History of Reality TV. How the rise in cosmetic surgery collided with reality television **10.00** ReincarNathan. Nathan is brought back to life as a bower bird on the Vogelkop Peninsula **10.30** Comedy Club: Wrinkles **10.55** The Comedy Club Interview. Sarah Campbell chats to Nathan Foad **11.00** Steven Appleby's Normal Life. Comedy with Paul McCrink **11.15** Hamish and Dougal: You'll Have Had Your Tea. The laird requires Hamish and Dougal's assistance with a shooting party. Last in the series **11.30** Tom Wrigglesworth's Hang-Ups. Tom is invited on a stag weekend by the sea

Radio 5 Live
MW: 693, 909
5.00am Wake Up to Money **6.00** 5 Live Breakfast **9.00** Nicky Campbell **11.00** Adrian Chiles **1.00pm** Nihal Arthanayake **4.00** 5 Live Drive **7.00** 5 Live Sport **9.00** 5 Live Sport: 5 Live Cricket. The team review day four of the second Pakistan v England Test **10.00** Colin Murray **1.00am** Dotun Adebayo

talkSPORT
MW: 1053, 1089 kHz
5.00am Early Breakfast **6.00** talkSPORT Breakfast with Alan Brazil **10.00** Jim White and Simon Jordan **1.00pm** Hawksbee & Baker **4.00** talkSPORT Drive with Andy Goldstein and Darren Bent **7.00** Kick Off **10.00** Sports Bar **1.00am** Extra Time

TalkRadio
Digital only
5.00am James Max **6.30** The Julia Hartley-Brewer Breakfast Show **10.00** The Independent Republic of Mike Graham **1.00pm** Ian Collins **4.00** Vanessa Feltz **7.00** Jeremy Kyle **8.00** Piers Morgan Uncensored **9.00** The Talk **10.00** Tom Newton Dunn **11.00** Live: James Whale **1.00am** Paul Ross

6 Music
Digital only
5.00am Chris Hawkins **7.30** Lauren Laverne **10.30** Mary Anne Hobbs **1.00pm** Craig Charles **4.00** Steve Lamacq **6.00** Steve Lamacq's Roundtable **7.00** Marc Riley **9.00** Tom Robinson **12.00** New Music Fix with Steve Lamacq **1.00am** New Music Fix with Mary Anne Hobbs **2.00** New Music Fix with Tom Ravenscroft **3.00** New Album Fix **4.00** New Music Fix Playlist

Virgin Radio
Digital only
6.30am The Chris Evans Breakfast Show with Sky **10.00** Eddy Temple-Morris **1.00pm** Jayne Middlemiss **4.00** Steve Denyer **7.00** Bam **10.00** Amy Voce **1.00am** Sean Goldsmith **4.00** James Merritt

Classic FM
FM: 100-102 MHz
6.00am More Music Breakfast **9.00** Alexander Armstrong **12.00** Anne-Marie Minhall **4.00pm** John Brunning **7.00** Smooth Classics **10.00** Smooth Classics **1.00am** Bill Overton **4.00** Early Breakfast

television & radio

Viewing Guide
Joe Clay

ITVX launch
ITVX

Top pick

ITVX is the new streaming service on the block, a replacement for ITV Hub but also a "destination" where you will find plenty of new dramas and documentaries alongside a wealth of programmes from the ITV archive. While ITVX as a platform has been available for a while now, with a mostly positive reaction from users fed up with the unreliable ITV Hub, today marks its official launch. The first commissions include *A Spy Among Friends*, an accomplished six-part espionage thriller from the producers of *Homeland* starring Damian Lewis and Guy Pearce. Based on Ben Macintyre's book, it tells the story of Kim Philby (Pearce), the notorious British spy who became a double agent for the Soviet Union. Lewis is superb as Nicholas Elliott, an operative with the foreign security agency SIS and the man sent to coax a confession out of the arrogant and duplicitous Philby, who just happens to be his closest friend. Another stellar adaptation is *The Confessions of Frannie Langton*, which is based on Sara Collins's award-winning debut novel about a female Jamaican slave (Karla-Simone Spence) who arrives in London and falls in love with her drug-addicted mistress (Sophie Cookson). *Tell Me Everything* is being pitched as *Skins* for Gen Z, a six-part drama focusing on how social media affects the mental health of teens, while *Plebs: Soldiers of Rome* is a feature-length episode of the merrily puerile Roman sitcom that brings the series to a close.

Christmas at Blenheim Palace
Channel 4, 8pm

Channel 4 is squeezing lots of screen time out of access to the country's stately homes at Christmas, and a new three-part series begins at Blenheim Palace, the 300-year-old baroque gem and birthplace of Winston Churchill. Over the festive season, the palace will stage Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale *The Snow Queen*, each state room representing a different part of the story. There are five truckloads of decorations ready for the palace's staff to install, while the head of catering is banking on pre-selling 12,000 tickets for a three-tiered afternoon tea.

Early

BBC1
6.00am Breakfast **9.15** Morning Live at Christmas. Magazine show with Jeanette Kwakye and Gethin Jones **10.00** Expert Witness. How forensic analysis of CCTV footage blew apart a suspect's alibi (AD) **10.45** Claimed and Shamed. A wife claiming on her husband's life insurance is exposed as a fraudster when police discover he is still alive (r) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer. The progress of properties in Cornwall, south London and the West Midlands (AD) **12.15pm** Bargain Hunt. From Brackley in Northamptonshire (r) (AD) **1.00** BBC News at One; Weather **1.30** BBC Regional News; Weather **1.45** Doctors. Emma struggles to deal with Cassidy's blackmail (AD) **2.15** Money for Nothing. Jacqui Joseph tries to make a profit from an ottoman and rusty garden gates (r) **3.00** Escape to the Country. Nicki Chapman helps a London author find a new home in rural Oxfordshire (AD) **3.45** The Bidding Room. Nigel Havers hosts as five dealers compete over a pair of pedal cars (r) **4.30** Garden Rescue. Charlie Dimmock and Lee Burkhill create a global garden in Corby (r) **5.15** Pointless. Quiz hosted by Alexander Armstrong (r) **6.00** BBC News at Six; Weather **6.30** BBC Regional News; Weather

BBC2
6.30am Money for Nothing (r) **7.15** Escape to the Country (r) **8.00** Sign Zone: MasterChef: The Professionals (r) (AD, SL) **9.00** BBC News **10.00** BBC News **12.15pm** Politics Live. The latest stories from Westminster and beyond **1.00** Best House in Town (r) **1.45** Lightning. Quiz hosted by Zoe Lyons (r) **2.15** World's Weirdest Events. A man who gets drunk without touching a drop of alcohol (r) (AD) **3.15** The Great British Sewing Bee. The sewers demonstrate their advanced skills in the final, making a bridesmaid dress, a summer festival outfit and an off-the-shoulder evening gown. Last in the series (r) (AD) **4.15** Back in Time for School. The teenagers experience the hands-on approach of a 1960s secondary modern school, in an era that was geared towards training them for the world of work (r) (AD) **5.15** Flog It! Paul Martin hosts from Rochester Cathedral in Kent, where Elizabeth Talbot falls for a book of fairy tales and Adam Partridge discovers an elegant chiming Swiss pocket watch (r) **6.00** Richard Osman's House of Games. Ashley John-Baptiste, Simon Rimmer, Claire Sweeney and Esme Young take part **6.30** Strictly: It Takes Two. Janette Manrara is back with more backstage gossip

ITV1
6.00am Good Morning Britain **9.00** Lorraine. Entertainment, current affairs and fashion news, as well as showbiz stories. Presented by Lorraine Kelly **10.00** This Morning. Daily magazine, featuring a mix of chat, showbusiness news, lifestyle features, topical discussion, health and beauty advice and more. Including Local Weather **12.30pm** Loose Women. The women put the world to rights once more and invite a guest to chat about what they are up to **1.30** ITV News; Weather **2.00** Dickinson's Real Deal. David Dickinson and his dealers set up stall in Oldham, where Alison Chapman gets her hands on some puppets, and Cheryl Hackney falls for a beautiful brooch (r) (AD) **3.00** Tenable. Quiz show hosted by Warwick Davis in which a team of five answers questions about top 10 lists, then tries to score a perfect 10 in the final round (r) **4.00** Tipping Point. Ben Shephard hosts the arcade-themed quiz in which contestants drop tokens down a choice of four chutes in the hope of winning a £10,000 jackpot (r) **5.00** The Chase. Bradley Walsh presents the quiz show as four contestants pit their wits against one of the Chasers (r) **6.00** Regional News; Weather **6.30** ITV News; Weather

Channel 4
6.05am Countdown (r) **6.45** Cheers (r) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond (r) (AD) **8.55** Frasier (r) (AD) **10.25** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA (r) **11.25** Channel 4 News Summary **11.30** Château DIY (r) (AD) **12.30pm** Steph's Packed Lunch. Weekday magazine show hosted by Steph McGovern **2.10** Countdown. With Rufus Hound **3.00** Kirstie's Handmade Christmas. The Christmas HQ halls are decked with all things handmade in a best decoration contest (r) (AD) **4.00** A Place in the Sun. A couple from Southampton are looking for a holiday home on the Caribbean island of Barbados. Their plan is to spend up to six months a year enjoying the tropical climate and golf facilities **5.00** Four in a Bed. A visit to the Fauconberg Arms in Coxwold, North Yorkshire (r) **5.30** Come Dine with Me. Day four in Basingstoke finds a winery worker planning a sophisticated evening, though whether her fancy approach will prove too much of a risk remains to be seen (r) **6.00** The Simpsons. With the guest voice of Lady Gaga (r) (AD) **6.30** Hollyoaks. Maxine finds a concerning voicemail from Verity, and later Eric threatens Maxine to keep quiet. Meanwhile, Theresa tells Romeo that she is going to leave the village (r) (AD)

Channel 5
6.00am Milkshake! **9.15** Jeremy Vine. The broadcaster and guests discuss the issues of the day with co-host Storm Huntley joining him for phone-ins and reading out viewers' correspondence **12.30pm** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun. A woman becomes the newly appointed Chairperson of the RBL Benidorm. Her new position brings added responsibility, and she is using it to positive effect by throwing a BBQ fundraiser (r) **1.25** 5 News at Lunchtime **1.30 FILM: Christmas Matchmakers (PG, TVM, 2019)** After a chance meeting at a food court, an overworked executive and a personal assistant bond over their difficult jobs. They devise a plan to get their bosses to fall for each other in hopes of having more time to themselves over the holidays. Romantic drama starring Vivica A Fox and Andrew Rogers **3.15 FILM: Christmas Unfiltered (PG, TVM, 2021)** A woman makes a wish for her family to really hear her and ends up unable to keep her feelings to herself. Festive fantasy starring Alison Fernandez and Judy Reyes **5.00** 5 News at 5 **6.00** Eggheads. Frankly Jazz try their luck against the Eggheads (r) **6.30** Eggheads. Dads' Cafe try their luck against the Eggheads (r) **6.55** 5 News Update



Tutankhamun: The Times scoop of a century

One hundred years ago, when the tomb of King Tutankhamun was discovered in Egypt, the world learnt of the treasures via The Times which had secured the exclusive rights and photographs. So just how did the newspaper get the scoop?

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BRITISH PODCAST AWARDS GOLD 2022

Evening

BBC1
7.00 The One Show Alex Jones and Ronan Keating host the live magazine show featuring an entertaining mixture of chat and stories of interest

7.30 EastEnders Sonia is given an important task ahead of Dot's funeral, while Felix and Finlay promise to help Whitney raise her baby (AD)

8.00 MasterChef: The Professionals The final four contenders are asked to create a dish inspired by a place close to their heart, then cook a show-stopping dish of their own creation for food critics Jay Rayner, William Sitwell, Leyla Kazim, Jimi Famurewa and April Jackson (AD)

9.00 The Traitors The stakes increase and the Faithfuls feel like they are on the backfoot. The players focus on building the prize pot in a mission that sees them go to new depths of despair. However, that is the least of their worries, with an explosive Round Table on the horizon (6/12) (AD)

10.00 BBC News at Ten

10.30 BBC Regional News and Weather

10.40 Question Time Fiona Bruce hosts the political debate from Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, inviting a panel of politicians and other guests to answer questions from an invited audience on subjects that have made the headlines over the past week

11.40 Newscast A political round-up, delivering the usual mix of serious analysis and light-hearted gossip

BBC2
7.00 Celebrity Antiques Road Trip Music veterans Francis Rossi and Linda Nolan join experts Philip Serrell and Natasha Raskin Sharp on an antiques pleasure cruise around Surrey and Sussex. It is fitting they have an iconic 1970s motor to nip around in and £400 each to spend on some antique delights

8.00 The Secret Genius of Modern Life The mathematician Hannah Fry finds out how 1970s car crashes helped us to count our steps, why high-altitude Second World War dog-fights led to a crucial health monitor, and how fitness trackers are being used to catch killers. *See Viewing Guide* (5/6) (AD)

9.00 The English Eli sets his compass for a new direction to atone for a past wrong and, now united in their hunt for revenge, grows closer to Cornelia. Trafford makes desperate preparations. Drama starring Emily Blunt (5/6) (AD)

9.50 Live at the Apollo: Christmas Special Katherine Ryan plays host, with routines by Marlon Davis, Joel Dommett and John Robins (/6) (r)

10.20 QI XS Highlights compiled from recent series' of comedy quiz *QI* (4/6) (r)

10.30 Newsnight With Katie Razzall

11.15 What We Do in the Shadows The vampires hold a seance to deal with a ghost infestation. Comedy starring Natasia Demetriou (2/10) (r) (AD)

11.35 What We Do in the Shadows Guillermo's search for virgins uncovers a deadly threat (3/10) (r) (AD)

ITV1
7.00 Emmerdale Mandy is very concerned, Matty makes a discovery, and Moira visits Cain. Meanwhile, Bernice believes in fate (AD)

8.00 Coronation Street Stephen fools Elaine into believing he is a victim of abuse, Alya threatens to report Griff's racism to his employer, and Hope persuades Joseph and Sam to conduct a séance (AD)

9.00 Gino's Cooking Up Love As the new arrivals join Gino's cooking school, it remains to be seen whether too many cooks will spoil the broth or a romantic spark will be ignited (AD)

10.00 ITV News at Ten

10.28 Weather

10.30 Regional News

10.45 Regional Programme

11.15 Gordon, Gino and Fred's Great Christmas Roast Gordon Ramsay and Gino D'Acampo host a festive banquet for members of the emergency services, competing to create the best menu, while *First Dates* maître d' Fred Sirieix keeps the wine flowing (r)

Channel 4
7.00 Channel 4 News

7.55 The Political Slot Political comment by Liberal Democrat MP Richard Foord

8.00 Christmas at Blenheim Palace New series. Life at the Oxfordshire mansion, a 300-year-old Baroque property set in 2,000 acres of Capability Brown-designed parkland, boasting the most extensive collections of portraits, furniture, sculpture and tapestries in Europe. *See Viewing Guide* (AD)

9.00 I Am Ruth Dominic Savage and Kate Winslet's one-off drama is a contemporary story touching on the endemic mental health crisis affecting young people. Winslet co-stars as Ruth, a loving and concerned mother who witnesses her teenage daughter Freya retreating into herself as she becomes more and more consumed by the pressures of social media. With Mia Threapleton, Joe Anders and Royce Pierreson. *See Viewing Guide* (AD)

11.05 24 Hours in Police Custody Bedfordshire Police race to rescue a 15-year-old girl after receiving intelligence that a 20-year old man is holding her captive at his flat in Luton. When she comes to the station, she reports being raped multiple times (2/2) (r) (AD)

Channel 5
7.00 Inside Aldi at Christmas A behind-the-scenes look at the inner workings of the supermarket during the festive period, revealing the secrets of the retailer's success. The programme looks back at its arrival in Britain in the 1990s (r)

7.55 5 News Update

8.00 Live: Winter on the Farm Helen Skelton and Jules Hudson present more coverage from Cannon Hall Farm in South Yorkshire with brothers Rob and Dave Nicholson. Plus, JB Gill joins the team along with *The Yorkshire Vet*'s Matthew Jackson-Smith and Shona Searson. Last in the series

9.00 The Man Who Took Shannon Matthews With access to family members, neighbours and professionals who knew Michael Donovan, and using drama reconstruction, this is the story of the man who abducted nine-year-old Shannon Matthews in 2008 and kept her in his flat for 24 days before she was found by the police

10.30 Blowing LA New series. Documentary drawing back the curtain on the world of expensive hair stylists (1/3)

11.25 Meet the Parents (12, 2000) A male nurse makes a disastrous bid to impress his girlfriend's father — a former CIA agent who does not suffer fools gladly. Comedy starring Robert De Niro, Ben Stiller and Teri Polo

Late

BBC1
12.10am FILM: The First Grader (12, 2010) An old man who fought for Kenyan independence seeks the chance to learn to read when free education is introduced, but faces opposition from parents and officials who see it as a waste of a school place. Fact-based drama starring Oliver Litondo and Naomie Harris **1.55-6.00** BBC News

BBC2
12.00 Simon Schama's History of Now Exploring how artists and writers have led the fight for equality (r) (AD) **1.00am** Sign Zone: Iolo's Anglesey (r) (SL) **1.30** Strictly Come Dancing: Musicals Special. The couples take to the floor (r) (AD, SL) **2.40-3.15** Strictly Come Dancing: The Results (r) (AD, SL)

ITV1
12.30am All Elite Wrestling: Rampage Hard-hitting, high-flying action **1.25** Teleshopping **3.00** Game of Talents. Two contestants pair up with Joel Dommett and Oti Mabuse to try to uncover the secret talents of mystery performers (r) (AD, SL) **3.50** Unwind with ITV **5.05-6.00** Beautiful Baking with Juliet Sear (r) (SL)

Channel 4
12.05am Deck the Halls: The Luxury Christmas Decorators (r) (AD, SL) **1.00** Food Unwrapped's Festive Feast (r) (AD, SL) **1.55** Kitchen Nightmares USA (r) (SL) **2.45** You Won't Believe This (r) (AD) **3.40** Couples Come Dine with Me (r) **4.35** Devon and Cornwall (r) (AD, SL) **5.30** Drawers Off (r) **5.55-6.05** Sunday Brunch Best Bits

Channel 5
1.15am The LeoVegas Live Casino Show 3.15 Victorian Britain: The Lost Films. Motion picture footage of Victorian-era Britain (r) **4.25** Henry VIII: Man, Monarch, Monster (r) **5.15-6.00** Henry VIII: Bloodlust and the Boleyns. A journey through the marriages, affairs and tyrannical politics of King Henry VIII's reign (r)

television & radio

The Secret Genius of Modern Life

BBC2, 8pm

Our obsession with counting steps has resulted in the fitness tracker becoming one of the most ubiquitous gadgets of recent times, with a third of the population owning one. Professor Hannah Fry applies her entertaining brand of pop science to the story of the invention and development of these devices that can monitor our every movement. She also finds out how car airbags transformed motion detection, how Second World War dogfights pioneered health-monitoring technology and how data from a Fitbit has helped to solve murders.

I Am Ruth

Channel 4, 9pm

Kate Winslet brings her star power to the latest entry in Dominic Savage's female-led *I Am* drama anthology series. Winslet also co-writes with Savage, making this a very personal project for her, even more so because her daughter, Mia Threapleton, also stars. Winslet plays Ruth, a concerned mother who is helpless as her teenage daughter, Freya (Threapleton), becomes consumed by social media. Mother and daughter give raw, naturalistic performances and the result is a stunning piece of work that will resonate with parents of teenagers.

Hopper: An American Love Story

Sky Arts/Now, 9pm

"No other painter ever painted loneliness so stubbornly," said Wim Wenders of Edward Hopper's pictorial narratives. Hopper's paintings have had a profound impact on American art and the psyche of the country. His 1942 *Nighthawks* is still seen as the defining image of modern loneliness — a group of people gathered together but failing to connect. This film attempts to find out more about the man behind the paintings. "I guess I'm not very human," Hopper once said. "All I really want to do is paint light on the side of a house."

Film Blue Velvet

Film4, 11.10pm

David Lynch's cult noir masterpiece starts when Jeffrey Beaumont (Kyle MacLachlan) finds a severed ear, and soon his investigation leads him to spy on the beautiful Dorothy (Isabella Rossellini) — but she is in the talons of Dennis Hopper's Frank Booth. (18, 1986)

Sky Max

6.00am Stop, Search, Seize (r) (AD) **8.00** DC's Legends of Tomorrow (r) (AD) **9.00** The Blacklist (r) (AD) **10.00** Supergirl (r) **11.00** NCIS: New Orleans (r) **1.00pm** Hawaii Five-0 (r) **2.00** S.W.A.T. (r) (AD) **3.00** The Blacklist. Red makes a disturbing request of Liz (r) (AD) **4.00** DC's Legends of Tomorrow (r) (AD) **5.00** Supergirl (r) **6.00** NCIS: New Orleans. A sailor is shot (r) **7.00** NCIS: New Orleans. Crime drama (r) **8.00** Rob & Romesh vs Restaurants: First Course. Rob Beckett and Romesh Ranganathan try to open their own restaurant (r) (AD) **9.00** Rob & Romesh vs Restaurants: Second Course. The duo open a curry house (r) (AD) **10.00** The Russell Howard Hour. Topical comedy **10.45** Micah Richards' Player Pranks (r) **11.15** We're Here. Small-town residents participate in a one-night drag performance (r) **12.25am** The Force: Manchester (r) **1.25** Brit Cops: Frontline Crime UK (r) (AD) **2.25** Road Wars (r) **3.00** Hawaii Five-0 (r) **4.00** S.W.A.T. (r) (AD) **5.00** Highway Patrol (r) (AD)

Sky Atlantic

6.00am Richard E Grant's Hotel Secrets (r) (AD) **7.45** Gomorrah (r) **10.00** True Blood (r) **12.05pm** Game of Thrones (r) (AD) **1.05** True Detective (r) (AD) **3.45** Gomorrah (r) **5.45** True Blood. An outcast Alcide visits his father (r) **6.50** True Blood. A spate of vampire-on-human attacks causes trouble for the Authority (r) **7.55** Game of Thrones. Ned investigates rumours about the Lannisters (r) (AD) **9.00** Game of Thrones. House Lannister prepares for conflict, and Khal Drogo vows revenge on the Seven Kingdoms (r) (AD) **10.05** The White Lotus. Black-comedy drama series following the exploits of a group of demanding vacationers at a luxury resort, this time in Sicily. Jennifer Coolidge stars (6/7) (r) **11.15** My Brilliant Friend. There is union unrest at the Soccavo plant. In Italian (3/8) (r) **12.15am** The Baby (r) (AD) **12.55** Ray Donovan (r) (AD) **2.00** The Great Game. Elena publishes a scandalous video. In Italian **4.10** Richard E Grant's Hotel Secrets. Double bill (r) (AD)

Sky Documentaries

6.00am Fish Town (r) **7.00** Discovering: Mel Gibson (r) **8.00** The Directors (r) **9.00** Rolling Stone: Stories from the Edge (r) (AD) **10.00** The Vietnam War (r) **11.10** The Nineties (r) **12.00 FILM: Hawking: Can You Hear Me? (12, 2021)** (AD) **1.50pm** My Icon (r) (AD) **2.00 FILM: The Loneliest Whale: The Search for 52 (PG, TVM, 2021) 4.00** Discovering: Mel Gibson (r) **5.00** The Directors (r) **6.00** The Vietnam War. Events of 1966-1967 (r) **7.10** The Nineties. A look at Bill Clinton's controversial presidency (3/8) (r) **8.00** Rolling Stone: Stories from the Edge. The history of the magazine (1/6) (r) (AD) **9.00** Jealous Guy: The Assassination of John Lennon. The life of the Beatles superstar (r) **10.50 FILM: Kings of Coke (15, 2022)** The story of a feared criminal organisation (AD) **12.35am FILM: Manhunt: The Search for Bin Laden (15, TVM, 2013) 2.35** Baltimore Rising (r) **4.20** The Directors. The life and career of Nicolas Roeg (r) **5.10** The Nineties (r)

Sky Arts

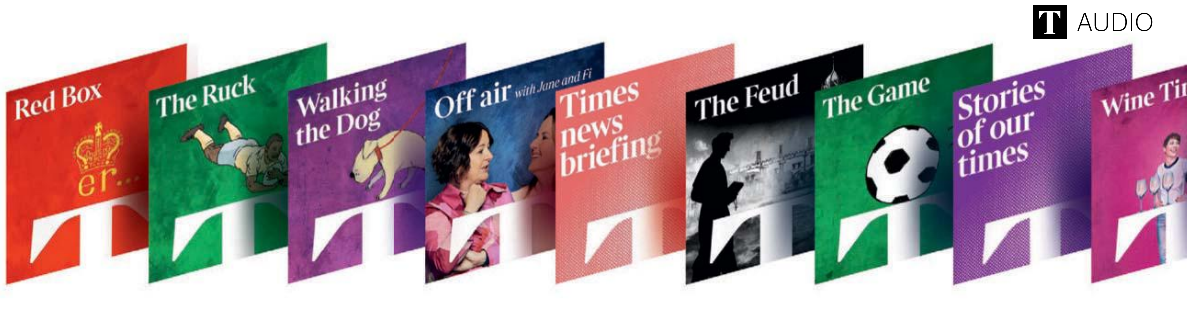
6.00am Beethoven: Complete Piano Concertos **6.40** Battle of the Brass Bands (AD) **7.35** A Brass Band Wonderland (AD) **9.00** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **10.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.00** Discovering: Robert De Niro **11.55** I, Claude Monet (AD) **12.50pm** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **1.50** Back to Basquiat **3.00** Portrait Artist of the Year 2021 (AD) **4.00** Discovering: Alain Delon. A profile of the French actor **5.00** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **6.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.00** Portrait Artist of the Year 2022 **8.00** The Directors. Quentin Tarantino (AD) **9.00** Hopper: An American Love Story. A profile of the artist Edward Hopper. *See Viewing Guide* **10.00** Discovering: Hugh Grant. The actor's life **11.00** Film Noir. Classics of the genre (AD) **12.00** Live from the Artists Den. With Corinne Bailey Rae **1.15am** Suede: The Insatiable Ones (AD) **3.30** Discovering: Bryan Ferry (AD) **4.00** Discovering: Michael Caine **5.00** Primal Scream: Music Icons **5.30** Video Killed the Radio Star

Sky Main Event

6.00am World Cup Report **7.00** World Cup Breakfast **10.00** Live DP World Tour Golf. Coverage of day one of the Alfred Dunhill Championship from Leopard Creek Country Club in South Africa. This event has been dominated by South African golfers, with eight of the last 12 winners coming from the country. Richard Sterne, Garth Mulroy and Charl Schwartzel have all won the competition since 2008, with Schwartzel winning the event a record four times since 2004 **3.00pm** World Cup Report **4.00** World Cup Report **5.00** World Cup Report **6.00** World Cup Report. The day's news **12.00** Live NFL: Los Angeles Rams v Las Vegas Raiders (Kick-off **1.15**). Coverage of the week 14 match at SoFi Stadium, as both sides go head-to-head for an important win. Both sides are fairly even in terms of wins against each other over the years **4.30am** Live Test Cricket: Pakistan v England. Coverage of day one of the second Test in the three-match series, which takes place at Multan Cricket Stadium

T AUDIO

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TalkTV

6.00am James Max. An initial insight into the day's top stories **6.30** The Julia Hartley-Brewer Breakfast Show **10.00** The Independent Republic of Mike Graham. The host looks through the morning newspapers **1.00pm** Ian Collins. Hard-hitting monologues and stimulating debates **4.00** Vanessa Feltz. The host gives a guide through the big stories of the day from the world of politics, current affairs and showbiz **7.00** Jeremy Kyle Live. The straight-talking voice of the people takes on important issues **8.00** Piers Morgan Uncensored. The host presents his verdict on the day's global events with an hour of debate, interviews with the world's leading figures, and plenty of fun **9.00** The Talk. A panel of opinionated famous faces from the worlds of politics, showbiz, business and current affairs debate the topics that everybody is talking about **10.00** First Edition. A look at tomorrow's news through the lens of the newspaper first editions **11.00** Piers Morgan Uncensored **12.00** Live: James Whale **1.00am** Vanessa Feltz **2.00** Jeremy Kyle Live **3.00** Piers Morgan Uncensored **4.00** The Talk **5.00** James Max

BBC4

7.00pm Christmas University Challenge. A team of LSE alumni fight it out against four alumni from Hertford College, Oxford. **7.30** Great American Railroad Journeys. Michael Portillo joins the US Navy Pacific Fleet, birthplace of elite flying academy Top Gun **8.00** The Real Marigold on Tour. Sheila Ferguson, Rustie Lee, Paul Nicholas and Dennis Taylor head to Iceland, where they split their time between the capital city of Reykjavik and the small fishing village of Hausavik **9.00 FILM: A Fish Called Wanda (15, 1988)** A gullible barrister is targeted by a seductive double-crossing thief trying to locate her imprisoned partner's hidden loot. Crime comedy starring John Cleese and Jamie Lee Curtis **10.45** Mark Kermode's Secrets of Cinema: British Comedy. The critic examines some of the techniques and conventions behind the genre **11.45** Around the World in 80 Treasures. Dan Cruickshank's journey takes him to Australia, Indonesia and Cambodia (3/10) **12.45am** Horizon: The Lost Tribes of Humanity **1.45** Great American Railroad Journeys **2.15-3.15** The Real Marigold on Tour

Talking Pictures

6.00am Honey West (b/w) **6.30** The Crofters of Achriesgill **6.55 FILM: Johnny Frenchman (U, 1945)** Comedy starring Françoise Rosay and Tom Walls (b/w) **9.00** The Footage Detectives **10.00 FILM: I Believe In You (PG, 1952)** Drama starring Cecil Parker (b/w) **11.50 FILM: Mister 880 (U, 1950)** Comedy with Edmund Gwenn (b/w) **1.40pm** Four Star Theatre (b/w) **2.15 FILM: Stowaway (PG, 1957)** Drama starring Trevor Howard (b/w) **4.05 FILM: Cast a Dark Shadow (PG, 1956)** Crime thriller starring Dirk Bogarde (b/w) **5.45 FILM: The Silent Enemy (PG, 1958)** Second World War adventure starring Laurence Harvey (b/w) **8.00** The Saint. Starring Roger Moore (b/w) **9.00** Justice. Harriet gets involved with two activists who advocate revolutionary violence **10.00** The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes **11.00** Enemy at the Door. Seventies drama **12.00 FILM: Richard's Things (12, 1980)** Drama starring Liv Ullmann **2.00am FILM: The Color of Money (15, 1986)** Drama sequel starring Paul Newman and Tom Cruise **4.25 FILM: Park Plaza 605 (U, 1953)** Detective drama with Tom Conway and Eva Bartok (b/w)

Film4

11.00am Decision at Sundown (U, 1957) Western starring Randolph Scott **12.40pm Gunsmoke (U, 1953)** Western starring Audie Murphy **2.15 The Long Arm (U, 1956)** Crime thriller starring Jack Hawkins (b/w) **4.10 The Bells of St Mary's (U, 1945)** Musical drama sequel starring Bing Crosby (b/w) **6.45 The Devil Wears Prada (PG, 2006)** A magazine editor's outrageous demands make her trainee assistant's life a nightmare. Starring Meryl Streep and Anne Hathaway (AD) **9.00 Bloodshot (12, 2020)** A resurrected Marine with augmented abilities tries to solve a conspiracy that robbed him of the woman he loved. Sci-fi thriller starring Vin Diesel **11.10 Blue Velvet (18, 1986)** A college student is drawn into the dangerous underworld of his apparently peaceful home town. Thriller starring Kyle MacLachlan and Dennis Hopper. *See Viewing Guide* **1.35am-3.35 Loving Vincent (12, 2017)** Animated biographical drama examining the life of painter Vincent van Gogh, focusing on the circumstances of his death. Featuring the voices of Douglas Booth and Robert Gulaczyk

More4

8.55am Kirstie's Handmade Treasures **9.15** A Place in the Sun **11.05** Find It, Fix It, Flog It (AD) **1.10pm** Heir Hunters **2.10** Four in a Bed **4.50** Kirstie and Phil's Love It or List It (AD) **5.55** Escape to the Château: DIY (AD) **6.55** Escape to the Château. A river boat (AD) **7.55** Grand Designs. Kevin McCloud follows a project near Newbury to construct a modern farmhouse that combines an open-plan party pad with functional spaces below (9/12) (AD) **9.00** Warplane Workshop. The team works on a 1930s Lockheed airliner used by MI6 to spy on pre-war Germany. Last in the series (AD) **10.00** The Lancaster Bomber at 80 with David Jason. The actor narrates a look at the origins and legacy of the iconic Second World War aircraft, featuring contributions from military historians and surviving crew members (AD) **11.05** 24 Hours in A&E. The story of a 22-year-old police officer who is rushed to St George's after crashing her motorbike while out on a ride with her father (1/7) (AD) **12.10am** Emergency Helicopter Medics **1.15** 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown **2.15** 24 Hours in A&E (AD) **3.20-3.50** Food Unwrapped (AD)

ITV2

6.00am Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records (SL) **7.00** The Cabins **8.00** Love Bites (AD, SL) **10.00** Dress to Impress **12.00** Rolling in It (AD) **1.00pm** Family Fortunes **2.00** Supermarket Sweep **3.05** One Tree Hill. Haley receives news of a possible tragedy **4.00** Chuck **6.00** Celebrity Catchphrase. The second of two World Cup editions of the game show (AD) **7.00** Dress to Impress. Dating show **8.00** Bob's Burgers. Gene learns that the recipe for his favourite chocolate has changed (AD) **8.30** Bob's Burgers. Linda chaperones Tina's weekend away at a heroine conference (AD) **9.00** Family Guy. Meg is kidnapped (AD) **9.30** Family Guy. Peter and Quagmire help Mort with his financial troubles (AD) **10.00** Celebrity Juice: The Happy Ending. Keith Lemon bids farewell to the comedy quiz **11.00** Family Guy. Animated comedy (AD) **11.30** American Dad! (AD) **12.00** American Dad! (AD) **12.30am** The Stand Up Sketch Show **1.30** Crossing Swords **2.25** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records (SL) **2.50** Unwind with ITV **3.00** Teleshopping

ITV3

6.00am Classic Coronation Street (AD) **7.00** Classic Emmerdale **8.05** Man About the House **9.10** Maigret (AD) **11.35** Heartbeat (AD) **1.40pm** Classic Emmerdale **2.50** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **3.50** A Touch of Frost. A woman is found dead in a car park (AD) **6.00** Heartbeat. A new arrival causes a stir (AD) **7.00** Heartbeat. A car-crash victim turns out to have violent criminal connections, while Peggy has trouble with some goats (AD) **8.00** Vera. When a suspected poacher is found dead from a single gunshot wound, Vera must unearth the truth behind his return to the moors after a 15-year absence (3/4) (AD) **10.00** Cracker. Part two of two. Fitz secures a confession of guilt from Cassidy, but later realises the declaration is false — forcing him to confront his own personal demons (7/7) (AD) **11.05** Cracker. Part one of three. Following a particularly violent murder, the police begin clutching at straws in their efforts to find the killer. Robert Carlyle guest stars (1/9) (AD) **12.15am** A Touch of Frost. A woman is found dead in a car park (AD) **2.30** Teleshopping

ITV4

6.00am The Champions **7.00** Cadfael **8.30** Magnum, PI (AD) **9.30** The Professionals (AD) **10.35** Minder (AD) **11.35** The Protectors **12.10pm** The Champions **1.10** Cadfael. A landowner is poisoned **2.55** Magnum, PI (AD) **3.55** The Professionals (AD) **5.00** Minder (AD) **6.00** Giant Lobster Hunters (AD) **7.00** BattleBots. Undefeated bots Bronco and Duck duke it out in the battlebox as the race to become BattleBots World Champion heats up **8.00** Beat the Chasers. Contestants from across the UK take on Jenny Ryan, Anne Hegerty, Shaun Wallace, Mark Labbett and Paul Sinha **9.00 FILM: Creed II (12, 2018)** Heavyweight champion Adonis Creed faces off against Viktor, the son of Ivan Drago, whom his mentor fought in the 1980s. Drama starring Michael B Jordan **11.35 FILM: Conan the Barbarian (15, 1982)** A formidable warrior seeks revenge on the brutal cult that killed his parents when he was a child. Fantasy adventure with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Max von Sydow (AD) **2.10am** The Protectors. The Contessa vanishes **2.45** Unwind with ITV **3.00** Teleshopping

Drama

6.00am Teleshopping **7.30** 'Allo 'Allo! **8.00** All Creatures Great and Small **9.00** New Tricks (AD) **11.00** Classic Casualty (AD) **12.00** The Bill **1.00pm** Classic EastEnders **2.25** New Tricks (AD) **4.25** All Creatures Great and Small. James encounters a fainting dog **5.25** As Time Goes By **6.00** 'Allo 'Allo! Comedy starring Gorden Kaye **6.40** Last of the Summer Wine. Howard gets a bargain when he buys a used car **7.20** Last of the Summer Wine. Howard takes Pearl and Marina out to dinner at the same time **8.00** Judge John Deed. The maverick judge is exiled to Warwick as punishment for his indiscretion with a claimant, and Jo becomes embroiled in an embezzlement case (4/6) (AD) **10.00** New Tricks. The team reinvestigates the 15-year-old murder of a boxer after the gun used to kill him is discovered at the scene of an armed robbery. Maggie O'Neill guest stars (9/10) (AD) **11.00** Hustle. Mickey and Danny take on a traditional American conman's challenge (2/6) **12.20am** 'Allo 'Allo! **1.00** As Time Goes By **1.40** Auf Wiedersehen, Pet. Oz falls for a ballerina **2.35** A Place to Call Home **4.00** Teleshopping

Yesterday

6.00am Churchill's Bodyguard **8.00** Top Gear (AD) **9.00** The World at War **10.00** Auschwitz: The Nazis and the Final Solution **11.00** Great British Railway Journeys Goes to Ireland **11.30** Great British Railway Journeys **12.00** Bangers and Cash (AD) **2.00pm** Great British Railway Journeys **4.00** The World at War **5.00** Auschwitz: The Nazis and the Final Solution **6.00** Secret Nazi Bases. Wewelsburg castle **7.00** Abandoned Engineering. Examining a ghost island once belonging to a secretive country on the fringes of Europe (2/11) (AD) **8.00** Bangers and Cash. Dave and Jack make their way to East Yorkshire to pick up a dusty Alfa Romeo and a 1930s Jowett (AD) **9.00** Bangers and Cash. Derek picks up some "emerging" sporting classics from the Far East when three Datsun Zs appear (5/10) **10.00** Bangers and Cash. A widow reluctantly parts with her husband's treasured collection of Rolls-Royces and Bentleys (10/10) **11.00** Abandoned Engineering (4/6) (AD) **12.00** Top Gear. With Alice Cooper (AD) **1.00am** Churchill's Bodyguard **3.00** Teleshopping

Variations

BBC1 N Ireland

As BBC1 except: 10.40pm The View **11.20** Question Time. Debate from Bishop Auckland **12.20am** Newscast **12.55-1.55** Top Gear (r)

BBC1 Scotland

As BBC1 except: 11.15am Bargain Hunt (r) (AD) **12.00-1.00** First Minister's Questions **2.15pm-3.00** Money for Nothing (r) **7.00-7.30** River City (r) (AD)

BBC1 Wales

As BBC1 except: 10.45am-11.15 Rookie Cops. Following the training of new officers (r)

BBC2 Wales

As BBC2 except: 11.15pm Beacons: Short Films from Wales **11.55** What We Do in the Shadows (r) (AD) **12.40am-1.00** The Fens: A Wild Year. Narrated by Toby Jones (r)

ITV1 Anglia/Border/Central/Granada/London/Meridian/Tyne Tees/West/Westcountry/Yorkshire

As ITV1 except: 10.45pm-11.15 Regional Programme

ITV1 Wales

As ITV1 except: 9.00pm-10.00 Coast & Country **10.45** Sharp End **11.15** Face to Face **11.45** Gino's Cooking Up Love (AD) **12.35am-1.25** It'll Be Alright on the Night (r) (AD)

STV

As ITV1 except: 10.30pm STV News **10.45** DNA Journey (r) (AD) **12.00-3.00** Teleshopping **3.50am-5.05** Night Vision

UTV

As ITV1 except: 9.00pm UTV Life **9.35-10.00** The World at Their Feet **10.45** Secrets of the Comedy Circuit **11.15** View from Stormont **12.10am** Gino's Cooking Up Love (AD) **1.00-1.25** Rare Breed: A Farming Year (r)

BBC Scotland

7.00pm The Years That Changed Modern Scotland (r) **8.00** Roaming in the Wild (r) (AD) **8.30** Landward **9.00** The Nine **10.00** Granite Harbour (AD) **11.00-12.00** Selling Scotland (r)

BBC Alba

6.00am Alba Today **5.00pm** Piseag & Cuilean/Kit & Pup (r) **5.05** Sionnach agus Maigheach (Fox & Hare) (r) **5.20** Shane an Chef (r) **5.30** Leum is Danns (Jump and Dance) (r) **5.45** Su Pic (Peek Zoo) (r) **5.50** Stòiridh (r) **6.00** An Saoghal Droil aig Pol Ploc/The Rubbish World of Dave Spud (r) **6.15** Na Dana-thursan aig Tintin/The Adventures of Tintin (r) **6.35** Damhan & Durrag/Pipas & Douglas (r) **6.40** Proiseact Ploigh (r) **7.00** An Là (News) **7.30** Fraochy Bay (r) **7.35** Live SPFL Challenge Cup **9.45** Eòrpa **10.15** Bannan (The Ties That Bind) (r) **10.45** Coin Trusaidh/Muster Dogs **11.40** Dhan Uisge (Lochindorb) (r) **11.45** Binneas: Na Trads (r) **12.00-6.00am** Alba Today

S4C

6.00am Cyw: Timpo (r) **6.10** Cymylaubychain (r) **6.20** Sigldigwt (r) **6.35** Twt (r) **6.45** Bach a Mawr (r) **7.00** Shwshaswyn (r) **7.10** Abadas (r) **7.20** Ein Byd Bach Ni **7.30** Dathlu 'Da Dona (r) **7.45** Blero yn Mynd i Ocido (r) **8.00** Bing (r) **8.10** Jamborî (r) **8.20** Rapsgaliwn (r) **8.35** Stiw (r) **8.45** Antur Natur Cyw (r) **9.00** Caru Canu (r) **9.05** Llan-ar-goll-en (r) **9.20** Nico Nôg (r) **9.30** Octonots (r) **9.45** Ahoi! (r) **10.00** Bing (r) **10.10** Dwylo'r Enfys (r) **10.25** Patrôl Pawennau (r) **10.40** Anifeiliaid Bach y Byd (r) **10.50** Twt (r) **11.05** Shwshaswyn (r) **11.10** Dathlu 'Da Dona (r) **11.25** Olobobs (r) **11.30** Blero yn Mynd i Ocido (r) **11.45** Ahoi! (r) **12.00** News; Weather **12.05pm** Caru Casglu (r) **12.30** Heno (r) **1.00** Dan Do (r) **1.30** Y Byd ar Bedwar (r) **2.00** News; Weather **2.05** Prynhawn Da **3.00** News; Weather **3.05** Canu gyda Fy Arwr (r) (AD) **4.00** Awr Fawr: Olobobs (r) **4.05** Twt (r) **4.20** Caru Canu a Stori (r) **4.30** Blero yn Mynd i Ocido (r) **4.45** Ahoi! (r) **5.00** Stwnsh: Byd Rwtsh Dai Potsh (r) **5.10** Y Brodyr Adrenalini (r) **5.20** Cath-Od (r) **5.35** Gwrach y Rhibyn (AD) **5.55** Ffeil **6.00** Bwrdd i Dri (r) **6.30** Richard Holt: Yr Academi Felys (r) **6.57** News **7.00** Heno **7.30** News; Weather **8.00** Pobol y Cwm (AD) **8.25** Rownd a Rownd (AD) **8.55** News **9.00** Pawb a'i Farn **10.00** Rygbi Pawb **10.45-11.50** Y Ffair Aeaf (r)

MindGames

Tetonor Fiendish No 316

80	30	104	24
57	108	22	216
110	18	260	36
21	128	58	72

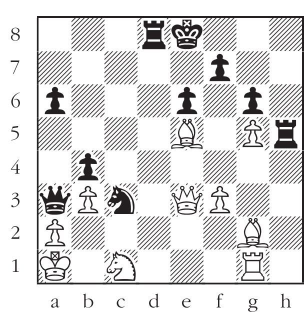
			4	5	6		10			18		26			

When complete, the strip below the grid can be split into eight pairs of numbers. Adding the numbers in a pair gives one of the 16 numbers in the grid. Multiplying them gives a different number in the grid. For example, a 4 and 6 in the strip could be paired to make 10 (4+6) and 24 (4x6) in the grid. Enter each sum below the corresponding number in the grid. The blanks in the strip must be deduced, bearing in mind the numbers are listed in ascending order.

Solutions tomorrow. The next Tetonor puzzle will appear on Tuesday

For more puzzles, including an extra Codeword, Train Tracks and Futoshiki go to page 10

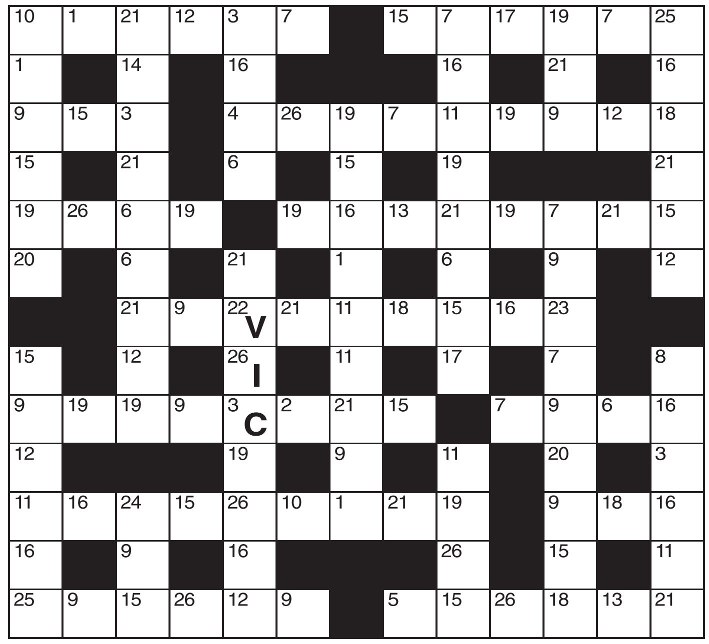
Winning Move



Black to play. This position is from Gurel-Muradli, World Junior Chess Championship, Cala Gonone 2022.

The World Junior is an annual event open to players under the age of 20. This year's event took place in October and was won by international master Abdulla Gadimbayli who finished ahead of numerous grandmasters. Can you spot Black's remarkable and elegant finish in this game?

Codeword No 4766



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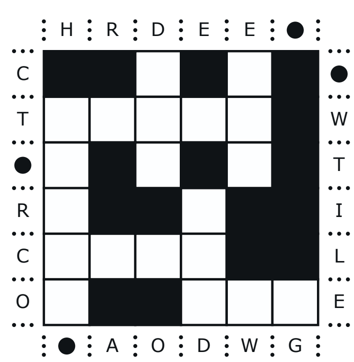
A B ~~C~~ D E F G H ~~I~~ J K L M N O P Q R S T U ~~V~~ W X Y Z

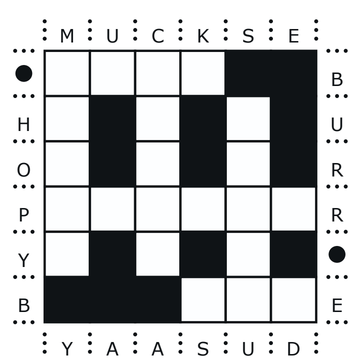
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
		C										
14	**15**	**16**	**17**	**18**	**19**	**20**	**21**	**22**	**23**	**24**	**25**	**26**
								V				I

Every letter in this crossword-style grid has been substituted for a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded. *Yesterday's solution, right*

Cluelines Stuck on Codeword? To receive 4 random clues call 0901 293 6262 or text TIMECODE to 64343. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. For the full solution call 0905 757 0142. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm).

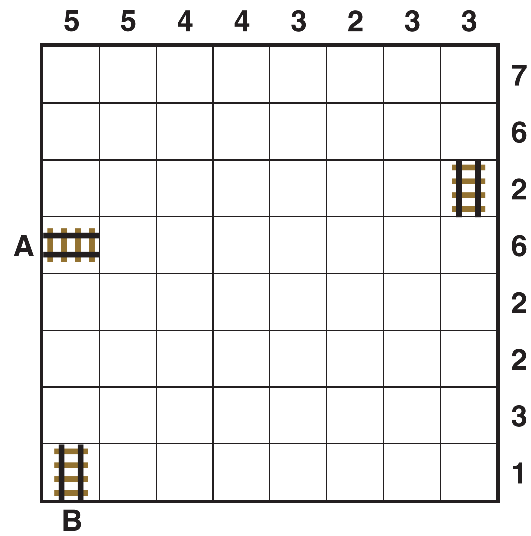
Lexica No 6647 No 6648





Slide the letters either horizontally or vertically back into the grid to produce a completed crossword. Letters are allowed to slide over other letters

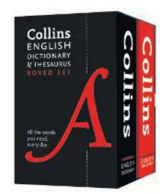
Train Tracks No 1806

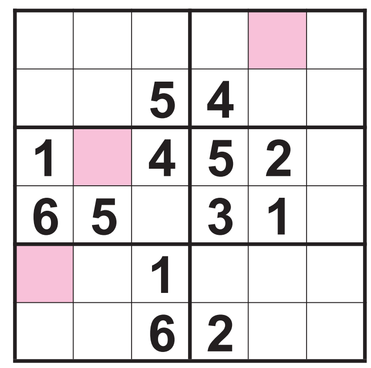


Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of rail go in each row and column. There are only straight rails and curved rails. The track cannot cross itself.

Win a Dictionary & Thesaurus

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x2 box contains the digits 1 to 6





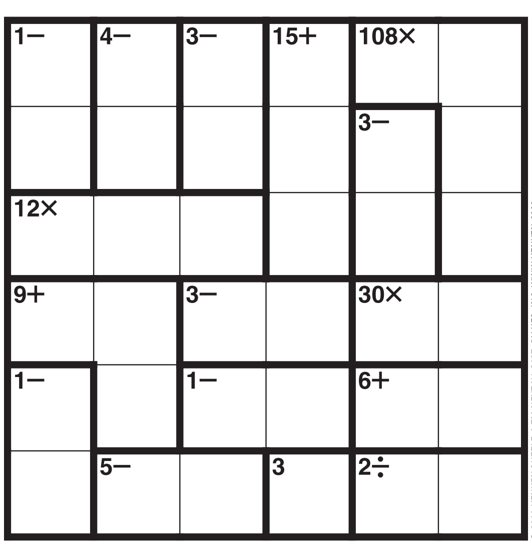
Winners will receive a *Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus*

Solve the puzzle and text in the numbers in the three shaded boxes. Text TIMES followed by a space, then your three numbers, eg, TIMES 123, plus your name, address and postcode to 64343 (UK only), by midnight. Or enter by phone. Call 09012 925274 (ROI 1516 303 501) by midnight. Leave your three answer numbers (in any order) and your contact details.

Calls cost £1 (ROI €1.50) plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. Winners will be picked at random from all correct answers received. One draw per week. Lines close at midnight tonight. If you call or text after this time you will not be entered but will still be charged. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm).

What are your favourite puzzles in MindGames? Email: puzzles@thetimes.co.uk

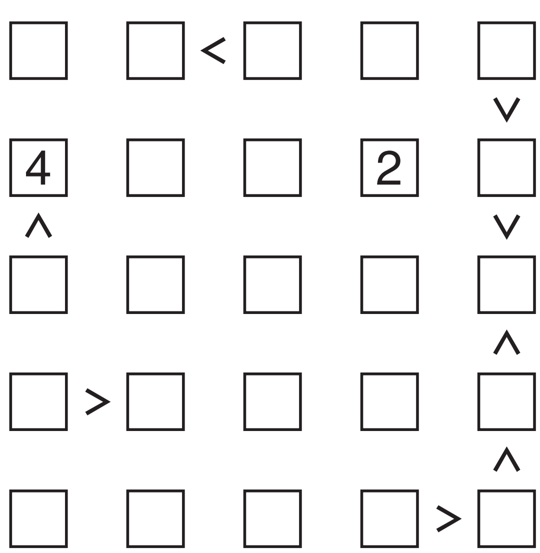
KenKen Difficult No 5758



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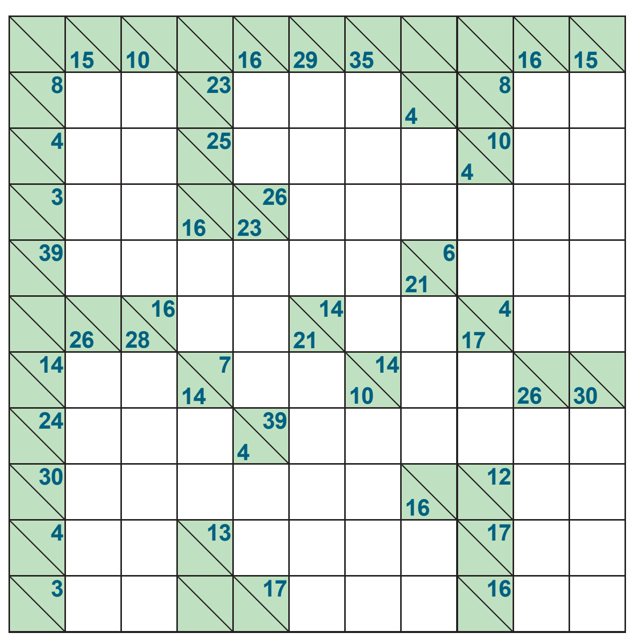
All the digits 1 to 6 must appear in every row and column. In each thick-line "block", the target number in the top left-hand corner is calculated from the digits in all the cells in the block, using the operation indicated by the symbol.

Futoshiki No 4364



Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

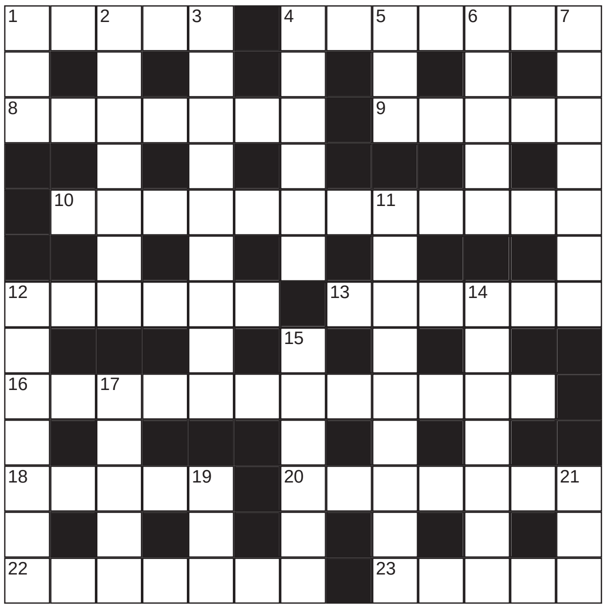
Kakuro No 3323



Fill the grid using the numbers 1 to 9 only. The numbers in each horizontal or vertical run of white squares add up to the total in the triangle to its left or above it. The same number may occur more than once in a row or column, but not within the same run of white squares.

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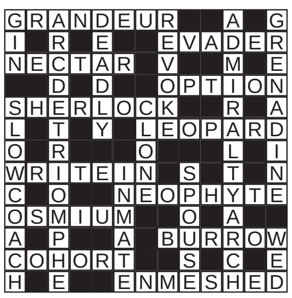
times2 Crossword No 9082



Across
1 Settled practice (5)
4 Silly, pointless (7)
8 Less old (7)
9 Indian side dish (5)
10 Operating location (7,5)
12 Two-wheeled handcart (6)
13 Farm implement (6)
16 Ulterior motive (6,6)
18 Encounters (5)
20 Metallic element (7)
22 For an unknown reason (7)
23 Big cat (5)

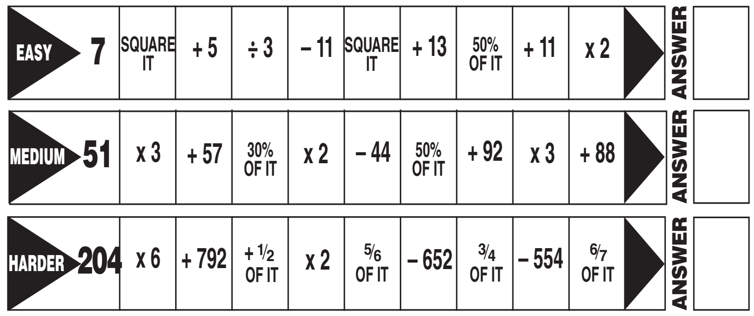
Down
1 Dried grass (3)
2 Woman's bedroom (7)
3 Line for acrobats (9)
4 Litter of pigs (6)
5 Rocky peak (3)
6 Prominent constellation (5)
7 Of little depth (7)
11 Work experience posting (9)
12 Caribbean island group (7)
14 Migratory thrush (7)
15 Vegetable gourd (6)
17 Fantasy; hope (5)
19 Note (3)
21 Impair (3)

Solution to Crossword 9081

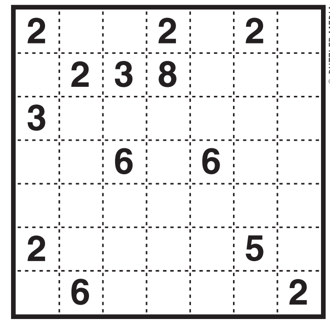


Need help with today's puzzle? Call 0905 757 0143 to check the answers. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Brain Trainer



Cell Blocks No 4649



Divide the grid into square or rectangular blocks, each containing one digit only. Every block must contain the number of cells indicated by the digit inside it.

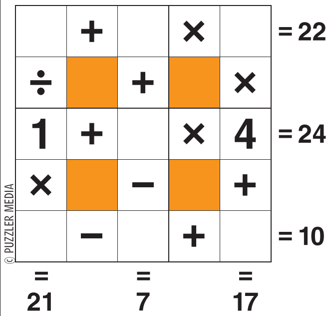
Polygon



From these letters, make words of **four** or more letters, always including the central letter. Answers must be in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, excluding capitalised words, plurals, conjugated verbs (past tense etc), adverbs ending in LY, comparatives and superlatives.
How you rate 12 words, average; 16, good; 23, very good; 31, excellent

Yesterday's answers
euro, lope, lore, loupe, lour, louver, louvre, love, lover, orle, over, ovule, plover, pole, poll, pore, pour, prole, prove, **pullover**, repo, role, roll, rope, roué, roup, rove, velour, vole

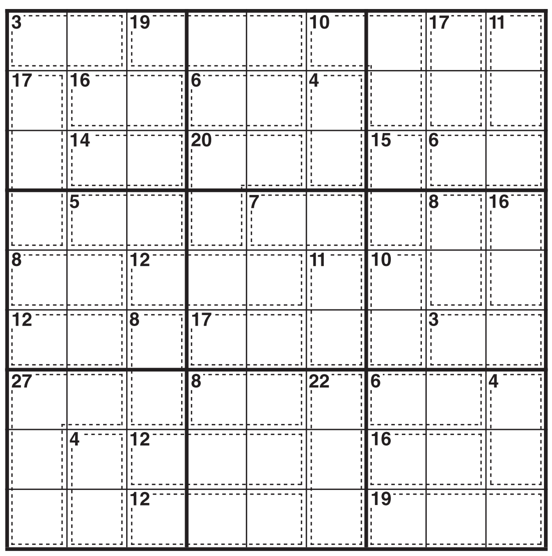
Set Square No 3326



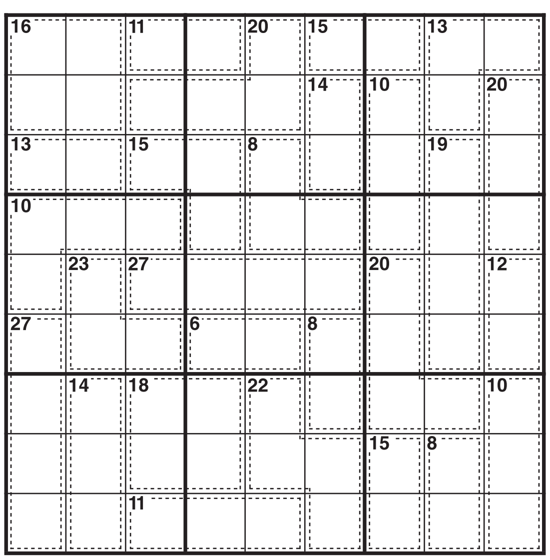
Enter each of the numbers from 1 to 9 in the grid, so that the six sums work. We've placed two numbers to get you started. Each sum should be calculated left to right or top to bottom.

Please note, BODMAS does not apply

Killer Gentle No 8628



Killer Tough No 8629



As with standard Sudoku, fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

Cluelines Stuck on Sudoku, Killer or KenKen? Call 0901 293 6263 before midnight to receive four clues for any of today's puzzles. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Bridge Andrew Robson

Dealer: South, Vulnerability: Both

Pairs | Advanced

North: ♠ A42 ♥ 105 ♦ Q3 ♣ A97642
West: ♠ Q10765 ♥ 92 ♦ K10972 ♣ 3
East: ♠ J ♥ KJ873 ♦ 865 ♣ QJ85
South: ♠ K983 ♥ AQ64 ♦ AJ4 ♣ K10

S	W	N	E
1♥	1♠ (1)	2♣	Pass
2NT(2)	Pass	3NT	End

(1) Skimpy, especially vulnerable, but that's modern bridge.
(2) After a Two-level response, this shows 15-19 and is forcing to game.

Contract: 3NT, Opening Lead: ♦ 10/♠ 6

There was some quality bridge in evidence on our featured 3NT from the Two Star Pairs final at the EBU Autumn Congress, held online on the excellent RealBridge platform. Plan the play on (i) ♦10 and (ii) ♠6 lead.

The diamond lead is favourable. You rise with dummy's queen (no point in leaving it bare) and, at trick two, lead a club to the ten, happy to lose to West (who cannot profitably continue diamonds). The ten wins, however, and when you cash the king, West discards (a spade).

By now, you have eight winners. At trick four, you cross to the ace of spades, expecting East to have a bare honour (with ♠ QJ10xx, West would probably have led a spade). East's jack falls and you cash the ace of clubs, discarding a heart.

At trick six, you lead a spade to your eight and West's ten, whereupon you know West will have to present you with a ninth trick in whichever of the three suits he leads. He'll probably switch to the nine of hearts — knowing a spade or a diamond will cost (East discouraging the diamond lead at trick one marking you with ace-jack). You can beat East's king with the ace, cash the queen, and now endplay West for the overtrick, either playing ace-then-jack of diamonds for West to lead into your king-nine of spades; or king-then-nine of spades, for West to lead into your ace-jack of diamonds. Ten tricks and game made plus one.

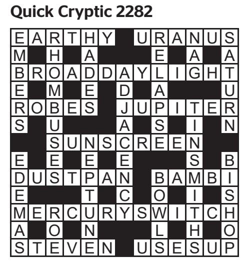
It's trickier on a spade lead. Beat East's jack with the king and play clubs normally, cashing the king and leading the ten, wincing when West discards. You duck the trick to East's jack and East finds the best switch to the jack of hearts (you can ride a low heart round to dummy's ten).

Your plan is to reach dummy's via the queen of diamonds (surely West has to have the king for his bid) but you'd better duck the jack of hearts. You can win the king of hearts continuation with the ace to lead the low diamond and, after rising with the king, West has no hearts.

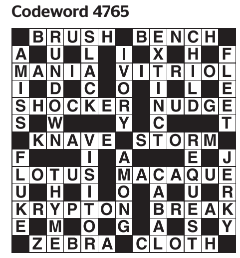
West exits with a second diamond but you win dummy's queen and play ace and a fourth club. East wins but his red-card return puts you in hand, able to discard dummy's low spade. You can now cross to the ace of spades to enoy the clubs. Nine tricks and game made. andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk

Solutions

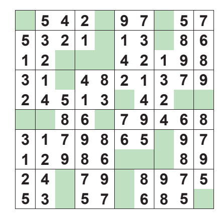
Quick Cryptic 2282



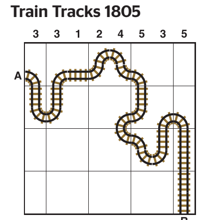
Codeword 4765



Kakuro 3322



Train Tracks 1805

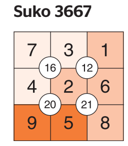


Sudoku 13,679

5	9	2	1	3	6	7	4	8
1	3	8	7	4	2	6	5	9
7	6	4	8	5	9	1	3	2
4	1	5	9	2	7	8	6	3
2	8	9	6	1	3	5	7	4
6	7	3	5	8	4	2	9	1
9	2	6	4	7	8	3	1	5
8	4	1	3	6	5	9	2	7
3	5	7	2	9	1	4	8	6

Quintagram
1 Die
2 Solace
3 Enough
4 Service
5 Bond Street

Suko 3667

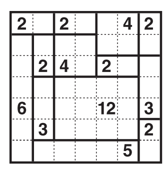


Brain Trainer
Easy 84; Medium 487; Harder 2,346

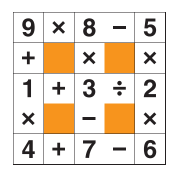
Sudoku 13,680

4	9	3	6	2	7	8	5	1
8	1	2	3	5	4	7	6	9
7	6	5	1	9	8	3	4	2
9	2	7	4	6	5	1	8	3
3	5	4	8	7	1	2	9	6
1	8	6	2	3	9	4	7	5
6	4	9	7	1	3	5	2	8
2	3	8	5	4	6	9	1	7
5	7	1	9	8	2	6	3	4

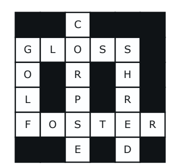
Cell Blocks 4648



Set Square 3325



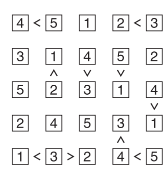
Lexica 6645



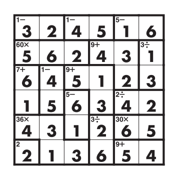
Sudoku 13,681

2	4	9	8	1	3	6	5	7
6	8	7	4	5	9	2	1	3
3	5	1	7	2	6	4	8	9
7	3	4	1	6	8	5	9	2
1	2	5	9	7	4	3	6	8
8	9	6	2	3	5	1	7	4
5	6	2	3	9	7	8	4	1
9	1	8	5	4	2	7	3	6
4	7	3	6	8	1	9	2	5

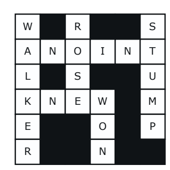
Futoshiki 4363



KenKen 5757



Lexica 6646



Killer 8626

7	5	8	2	6	3	4	9	1
4	1	2	8	7	9	3	5	6
6	3	9	1	5	4	2	7	8
2	8	3	5	4	7	6	1	9
9	7	6	3	1	8	5	2	4
5	4	1	9	2	6	7	8	3
8	6	4	7	9	5	1	3	2
3	2	5	4	8	1	9	6	7
1	9	7	6	3	2	8	4	5

Chess — Winning Move
1 ... Rdl! (threatening 2 ... Qxa2 mate) 2 Rxdl (2 Bxc3 bxc3 3 Qxc3 Rxgl is hopeless for White as the queen checks soon run out) 2 ... Qb2+! (sacrifices on an empty square are notoriously hard to see) 3 Kxb2 Nxdl+ 4 Kbl Nxe3 and, remarkably, the white bishop on g2 is trapped. Black will emerge with a winning material advantage

Word watch
Charivari (b) A mock serenade to newlyweds (*Collins*)
Foziness (c) Lack of spirit (*Chambers*)
Impetrate (c) To obtain by request (*OED*)

Killer 8627

1	8	3	9	7	5	6	2	4
9	6	4	8	3	2	7	5	1
2	7	5	4	1	6	8	3	9
7	9	1	5	2	8	3	4	6
6	5	8	3	9	4	1	7	2
4	3	2	7	6	1	5	9	8
3	1	7	6	4	9	2	8	5
8	4	6	2	5	3	9	1	7
5	2	9	1	8	7	4	6	3

Quiz
1 Eels **2** New Zealand **3** (Christian) Dior **4** Banksy **5** Sunderland **6** John Lennon **7** Plymouth **8** *Touching the Void* **9** Dave **10** Matt Berry **11** An institution **12** Arno Schmidt **13** Pedro Lascuráin. It is the shortest presidency in history **14** Adam Hills **15** Guyana

THE TIMES 08.12.22

MindGames

For extra puzzles See page 10

Word watch
David Parfitt

Charivari
a Of mediocre quality
b A mock serenade to newlyweds
c A light two-wheeled carriage

Foziness
a Unsuccessful humour
b Style, pizzazz
c Lack of spirit

Impetrate
a To add force or energy to
b To instil with ideas
c To obtain by request

Answers on page 15

Sudoku

Mild No 13,682

					5		4	
	4	8		2			3	7
	5		3		1	9		
	7		6			8		4
							1	
9		2			4	6		
8	3		5				9	
		9			3	7	6	
		4	7					

Fiendish No 13,683

2						6		
	5			3	1			
		6			4			3
		2				9	4	
3							7	
	7							
6	3				9	8		
		8	5				1	
		5		4				6

Super fiendish No 13,684

					4			
9						5	7	
			3	6			2	
	3	2		4				8
		4			8	9		
						6		
6	9			5	7			
		8			2			
		5					8	

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Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

The Times Daily Quiz
Olav Bjortomt

1 The European conger (*Conger conger*) is the heaviest of which fish?

2 The silver fern motif is associated with which Commonwealth country?

3 In 2003, which French fashion house launched the limited edition fragrance Chris 1947?

4 Christopher Walken destroyed a genuine artwork by which Bristol-born graffiti artist in the TV show *The Outlaws*?

5 North of the River Wear, Hylton Castle, Roker and Seaburn are suburbs of which port-city?

6 Ian Hart played which Beatle in the films *The Hours and Times* (1991) and *Backbeat* (1994)?

KYPROS/GETTY IMAGES



15

7 Luke Pollard (Sutton and Devonport) and Johnny Mercer (Moor View) serve as MPs for which city?

8 Which 1988 Joe Simpson book is about a disastrous descent from Siula Grande in the Andes in 1985?

9 Which English rapper has had No 1 singles with *Funky Friday* (2018) and *Starlight* (2022)?

10 Which English actor voices the pig Prince Merkimer in Matt Groening's animated series *Disenchantment*?

11 What did Ralph Waldo Emerson call "the lengthened shadow of one man"?

12 Which West German author wrote the huge novel *Bottom's Dream* (1970)?

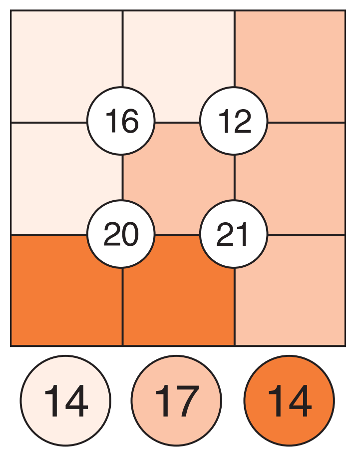
13 Who served as president of Mexico for an estimated 45 minutes on February 19, 1913?

14 Which co-host of *The Last Leg* played for Australia at the recent Physical Disability Rugby League World Cup?

15 The national flag of which South American country is pictured?

Answers on page 15

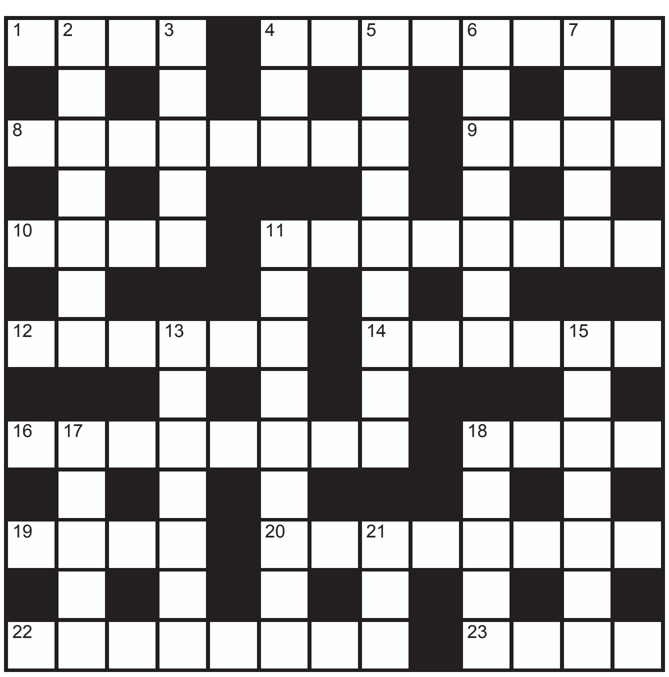
Suko No 3667



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

For interactive puzzles visit thetimes.co.uk

The Times Quick Cryptic
No 2283 by Hurley



Across
1 Post for men, by the sound of it (4)
4 Account by cleric with no mistakes (8)
8 Splendour of Greece and Europe half-forgotten? (8)
9 Survey charge having payment at start for time (4)
10 Party in British wood (4)
11 Group, ill-willed at the outset, attempt robbery and violence (8)
12 Nice drink, visiting bar at centre on return (6)
14 Talk about empty lodge as holiday accommodation (6)
16 Additional work due to unexpected item (8)
18 Change theatrical act (4)
19 Monster forgeries displayed regularly (4)
20 Certain to use lab for a change (8)
22 Praise, insincere, of place to live, too effusive, riling you initially (8)
23 Dad joining Church — step forward (4)

Down
2 Unfortunate friar in A&E finding cost going up? (7)
3 With article removed, start meal (5)
4 Mimic clumsy person (3)
5 Record, very bad, extremely lame (9)
6 Copy salesperson left I scan, removing covers (7)
7 Row about learner, one working on roof? (5)
11 Obstruction bid — a racer confused (9)
13 Annoyingly pester men caught in wrong legally (7)
15 A little water rat I classified as wandering (7)
17 Watch Roman poet run off? (5)
18 Workers' group overlooking impudent talk in plant (5)
21 For example, authority to influence decision? (3)

*Yesterday's solution on page 15**

